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MY JOURNEY TO MEDINAH.

MY JOURNEY TO MEDINAH:

DESCRIBING A PILGRIMAGE TO MEDINAH,

PERFORMED BY THE AUTHOR DISGUISED AS A MOHAMMEDAN.

BY

JOHN F. KEANE

(*Hajj Mohammed Amin*),

AUTHOR OF "SIX MONTHS IN MECCAH."

R. A. S. 49

There were men with hoary hair amidst that pilgrim band:
Why had they come to wither there, away from their childhood's land?
There was woman's fearless eye, lit by her deep love's truth;
There was manhood's brow serenely high, and the fiery heart of youth.

What sought they thus afar? Bright jewels of the mine?
The wealth of seas? the spoils of war?—No——.

—*Hemans.*

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PREFACE.

On concluding my account of the Mohammedan pilgrimage to Meccah, in my work "Six Months in Meccah," I promised that, should the reception of it by the public encourage me to do so, I would continue the narrative of my travels in the Hejaz. I am happy to say that the book has been most favourably received, and therefore I now fulfil my promise, by publishing the following account of my pilgrimage to Medinah.

I trust that the series of uncommon adventures met with will make up in interest for what the book may lack in information. For the truth of the narrative, I pledge my name and faith.

JOHN F. KEANE (Hajj Mohammed Amin).

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MY JOURNEY TO MEDINAH.

CHAPTER I.

THE DEPARTURE FROM MECCAH.

> Faith, fanatic Faith, once wedded fast
> To some dear falsehood, hugs it to the last.
>
> LALLA ROOKH.

WITHOUT interrupting the sequence which is intended to be maintained between this volume and "Six Months in Meccah," I may introduce myself as having now lived for some months disguised as a Mohammedan, and acting as the servant of a rich native of India, known as the "Amér," whom I am now about to accompany on a pilgrimage from Meccah to Medinah, and then to return by Meccah to Bombay.

Of the whole of this journey, and of the many and strange adventures met with by my companions and myself, I shall now proceed to give an account. Though at first I shall find it necessary to go accurately into many apparent trifles, I feel pretty sure that, as the narrative opens out, the reader will be rather thankful that he has plodded through much of the dry minutiæ of the earlier chapters.

The Mohammedan pilgrimage to Medinah is not, like the pilgrimage to Meccah, commanded in the Koran. It is a purely gratuitous tender of respect to the memory of the Prophet who is buried there, and is in no way an obligatory religious duty. Those who perform it, though aware that it is theologically a work of supererogation, do look forward, as a reward for their meritorious penance, to some slight return of superexaltation in the next life.

The distance, by the shortest road, from Meccah to Medinah is only three hundred and seventy-five miles, but by the roundabout way known as the Sultan's Road, which was followed by us, the distance is reckoned to be five hundred miles; and

from my own observation I should say that it was fully as much.

After the "Great Pilgrimage" to Arafat, the pilgrims who intend to go on to Medinah remain in Meccah for a time, to organise caravans and make preparations for the journey. Each of the caravans is composed, as far as possible, of individuals speaking the same language. An interval of four or five days is allowed to elapse between their different departures, so as to avoid there being too great a demand for supplies on the road at any one period, and to allow the wells of the desert time to replenish themselves between the passing of the caravans. Though this arrangement is generally said among the pilgrims to owe its origin to Bedawin influence; and it is greatly to the advantage of the Bedawi, for the comparatively small parties of pilgrims are much more at their mercy than were the immense well-protected caravans, consisting of many different nationalities, in Burton's day.

Every year the Malays are the first to be ready, and this year they started nine days after their return

from Arafat, The Hindi caravan is invariably the last to leave Meccah; and not till a month after the pilgrimage did we begin to collect in the Wady Fatima, a valley about four miles north-west of Meccah, and the point of departure for the Medinah caravan. To this camp I walked with one of my companions on the evening of the day before our final leave-taking—the Amér only then making up his mind to take me. In passing out through the streets of the town I purchased a few private stores, such as tobacco, pipe, matches, and a good strong pocket-knife. When my companion and I reached the camp we went into the Amér's tent, and he received me most graciously, telling me to make myself comfortable in the tent, and saying that if I had forgotten anything, or wished to purchase anything for the journey, there would be plenty of time to-morrow. It had been dusk when we reached the camp, and all those who were allowed to sleep in the tent with the Amér had chosen their places, and there was left only room for one, in a very inconvenient place near the

entrance. There I shook down my blankets on the carpeted sand, placed my bundle for a pillow, and after a last pull at the hookah, as it was being passed from one to another, rolled myself up to try and sleep. My tent-mates seemed tired, and their conversation and tobacco began to die out; but when the final muttered prayer had ceased I still found myself wide-awake. The night was very cold, and my blanket, though thick enough for the house, I found would never do for the desert. The tent walls were single, and the tent badly pitched, so that the wind entered freely under the lower edge of the canvas. I got up and shut out the draught at that point by building a little bank of sand along the outside, abreast of my stretch. I then tried again to go to sleep, but it was no good; the unintermitting scratchings of my bed-fellows fell on my ear in the "stilly night" so distinctly, that I all at once found myself guessing from the sound what part of themselves they were scratching; and then I got so interested and curious about it that I asked my next neighbour the seat

of his irritation, but found he was doing it in his sleep. After a time numerous entomological specimens began "to work their wicked will" on me, and I took to scratching. Hitherto I had not been troubled much in this way; instinct in the various varieties of the insect "faithful" had taught them to avoid defilement through me—my companions said it was a sign of bad health. But whatever it was, I had gone for days without a "strange bedfellow," while the Amér had two or three skilled "shikaris"* to beat over his person every day, and his covers never failed to afford the liveliest sport. But now all the noxious creatures which Mussulman flesh is heir to, seemed to have been seized with a sudden rage for christian blood. I suppose I must have scratched myself to sleep at last, for the morning call to prayers transmuted me from the Russian army retreating over the Balkans, after a crushing defeat by the Turks, into a very flea-bitten, stiff, unrested pilgrim, who had to perform his ablutions and go cheerfully about his daily devotions.

* Hunters.

On our falling-in, outside the tent, for prayers, I was introduced to two distinguished strangers, countrymen of the Amér's, who had now been added to our party, and were living in the tent. The Amér described me as a great traveller, who had been in many countries, and mentioned a number of services I had rendered him, some of which were founded on fact, but most of which, I am sorry to say, were pure invention. Among other accomplishments of mine, he told them that I could cut a rope in two and put it together again, so that the minutest search would not detect the joint.* This showed me that I had risen in favour with the Amér for some reason—probably my seeming ready compliance with his wish that I should go with him to Medinah, contrasting as it did with the sullenness of my companion, whom, like me, the Amér had intended to send off to India at once and not to take to Medinah with him.

The first of the strangers above alluded to was a thin little old Tallukdar, reputed very rich, and a great

* Common long-splice.

miser. The other was a native gentleman, who lived by his wits, and was able to dress richly and curiously out of what he made. He was a universal genius, his imitations of the trumpetings and screams of an infuriated elephant being such as might deceive the head-keeper of the "Lord of the White," and was only to be equalled, in its way, by his bul-bul song. Add to these accomplishments, that he was a deep politician, an advanced scientist, a devout "true believer," and one of the most powerfully-built men I ever saw. I need scarcely say he turned out to be a great acquisition to the Amér's suite. After the morning meal I went to the Amér's steward, or Dirvani, and asked him to get me another blanket and a Bedawin camel-hair cloak* with a hood to it. He tried to satisfy me with a blanket only, so after a good deal of shilly-shallying I went to the Amér himself, and told him what I wanted, and he ordered his Dirvani to send into Meccah at once for them.

This practice, usual all over the East when a long journey is intended, of going out for a short

* Aba.

trial-trip, and living for a day or two within easy reach of your source of supplies, under precisely similar circumstances as will be necessitated by the road, has its advantages where rapidity of transport is only a secondary consideration to indulgence in lazy habits, and among people who regard the exerting of a particle of foresight as contravening Providence.

I almost despair of being able to describe our setting out from Wady Fatima in any kind of order. From our tent-entrance the scene on every side presented a massed inextricable chaos of tents, camels, and men, distributed by chance over the ground in about equal bulk. But, as my habit was, I will take my readers to some elevated standpoint, from which we will look down together on the movements of this disorderly camp.

This way I had of frequently ascending elevations from which to observe, had become a standing joke against me among my companions. If at any time I was not to be found when wanted, someone would facetiously remark: "Oh! Mohammed Amin has gone

climbing;" or sometimes one of them would point derisively to any little mound we might be passing, and say: "Sailor, why don't you go up aloft?" I was frequently told to fancy the tent-pole a mast, and climb up it. For my part, I thought this was as good an explanation of my little eccentricity as they could have conceived.

About two hundred yards from our side of the camp there rose a rocky hill, some hundred feet high; towards this I went after noonday prayer, and clambered to the top. Just at the summit I rose a brace of partridges, and remembering that we had two double 12-bores and five hundred cartridges in the tent, it looked like the promise of a little sport by the way, which was very cheering. The plain below, as seen from this standpoint, was an almost circular valley of a mile across, bounded by low rocky hills. Most of the surface of the valley consisted of loose yellow sand; but here and there grew patches, of an acre or so in extent, of coarse brown grass, a couple of feet high, among which a number of camels were grazing. From this large

valley narrower valleys wound off among the surrounding hills. All over the plain, leading towards every outlet from it, were beaten camel-tracks: these last look exactly like a beaten footpath in England. The town of Meccah was hidden behind the hills, but the road to it might be easily known by the number of passengers going along it, to and from the camp, with occasional half-frantic Bedawin riders, on swift camels, flying backwards and forwards on some almost forgotten important commission. Close under the hill upon which I had posted myself, and not more than one hundred yards from the nearest tents, were the wells—three round pits, about thirty feet deep, having stone walls, about four feet high, built round the mouths of each of them, with a number of stone troughs placed near each well for the camels to drink from. The water is brought up by means of a hide draw-bucket. The above describes the well we shall come to at nearly every halt on our journey; perhaps we may find a rough post and pulley, for the bucket-rope, where

the well is very deep, and we may have to pay a toll for the water at some of them, but all the wells in the Hejaz are very similar in construction. At this time our wells exhibited a lively scene of squabbling between the Bedawi, whose camels were "laying in water for a voyage," it seemed, and the pilgrims who were filling their skins, pots, and bottles with a supply to last them until the next halt.

It was impossible to judge how large our caravan would be from the size of the camp, for a great proportion of it was not going with us, but would return to Meccah after seeing us off.

About three P.M. the watering of the camels appeared to be nearly finished, and the bustle in the camp increased. Here and there a few tents were being struck, or a nucleus in the tumult, which had looked in the distance like a "free fight," would gradually dissolve itself into a string of some half-a-dozen laden camels. In a short time, noticing our tent was about to be struck, I took a stroll down the opposite side of the hill to the plain and gathered a few flowers, some of which were

very pretty and sweet scented, and returned with them to the Amér, as I knew he was very fond of flowers. The tent had been taken down over his head, and there he was sitting on the tent carpet, with four or five others, smoking hookahs and placidly awaiting events.

It was very tickling to see them so calm and unconcerned in the midst of such excitement and uproar as the remainder of the scene displayed. I handed him the flowers and he began to play with them as if he were at home. I then looked for an old friend of mine, the third warrior, junior member of the Amér's bodyguard, who told me he had put my new blanket and cloak on a camel on which he and I were to ride, and which was ready. He led me off to look at it. It was a very high camel, and it turned out to be the highest and worst in the whole caravan. After seeing our camel we went back and took the tent-carpet from under the Amér, to roll it up, and left him sitting on the sand, perhaps more indifferent to results than before, and then we rushed recklessly into the heat

of the action, and I have no doubt that, together, we performed prodigies of obstruction. I know that more than once we came near being slain by exasperated Bedawi. But there must have been some method in all this commotion, for Shaykh the Bo'sen,* our Bedawin conductor, whose tall form, heavy iron-shod mace, and hoarse curse appeared ubiquitous, ultimately succeeded in evolving order out of it.

Towards dusk the camels began to form themselves into lines and straggle about the plain. Then an ugly, truculent, little, old Bedawin rushed at the third warrior and myself, as though he regarded us as his long-sought prey, and drove us before him to our camel, which it seemed we had been expected to mount as soon as it was ready.

Our camel was one of a string of some twenty others, connected head-and-tail by their halters, which allowed about two fathoms drift between each camel.

* I gave him that name in my mind from his seamanlike bearing.

The tow-ropes are made of small cocoanut-fibre line, about an inch in circumference, and not so strong but that it will part if the camel falls; though with a terrible jar on the animal. The halters of such camels as are inclined to lag are fitted with an ingenious spurring-curb, formed of two small plates of iron with serrated edges, and these edges are turned in, and their sharp points pressed against each side of the lower jaw by the tightening of the halter.

We now had to mount our camel without a ladder. This is done by first pulling the animal's head down to the ground with the left hand, and then quickly placing the left foot in the hollow of the back of its neck, at the same time catching at the rise of its shoulder with the right and letting go with the left hand, the animal then throws up its head, and with a slight turn of your body you find yourself placed deftly in the saddle. After some practice, and by hopping along a few steps, a camel can be mounted in this way while going at considerable speed. But in getting into the large

cumbersome "shugduf," or covered-in litter used by pilgrims, the platforms of which are on a level with the top of the hump, great care must be taken to land in the centre, or you may overbalance and bring down the whole concern; and after getting in you must wait until your partner is mounted, so that you may deposit yourselves carefully and simultaneously on your respective sides. Then, after a little trimming of ballast from one side to the other, you may stretch out at full length, with your feet to the open or front end of the shugduf. Both my companion and I managed this without much difficulty, considering it was our first attempt of the kind, and then remarked that we were very hungry. This was a bad look-out; we had neither of us eaten anything since morning, and there was no knowing when we should get our next meal. Soon we both noticed a most disagreeable smell, and after some conjecture concluded it must come from the camel.

CHAPTER II.

DEPARTURE FROM WADY FATIMA.

We made a great many false starts and long stands —not *still*, for laden camels cannot stand still, it appears to give them pain to do so, and they constantly shift the weight from one leg to the other in a most distracting manner, completely throwing out all your balance adjustments. But at last we fairly got off. The moon was young, and the night soon became very dark. What a miserable night that was! The awful jumpity-wabbledy gait of Mabarak* (for that was our camel's name) soon jolted us into utter despondency, wriggled our blankets off our bodies, and tied them up into great knots under us, and at every jolt I felt a certain conviction that some piece

* The fortunate.

of my property was being shaken out into the desert and lost. To add to our wretchedness, a sand-hopping little "preparation" of a Bedawin camel-driver glided along by our side, shrieking curses at us to "Sit forward," "Sit back," or "Sit in the middle," without ceasing for five minutes the whole night, accompanying himself by an incessant "rub-a-dub-dub with a club" on the hocks of Mabarak that sounded quite close to one's ear. I afterwards ascertained that he had no object in thus belabouring the poor brute; it was only done from force of habit—perpetual absence of mind, in fact. I had been made altogether too sick by the shaking I was getting and the horrid smell we carried with us, to "turn and rend" that Ishmaelite, otherwise it might have been pretty bad for him before morning.

Several writers have made observation to the effect that few things recall lost recollections like the "greeting of the nostrils by a long-forgotten odour." I quite agree with them. Mabarak reminded me perfectly of a scene of my boyhood. It was a visit to a Hindoo burning-ground in Madras,

when I got on the lee-side of an active cremation. The smells were identical. We did not suffer so much from hunger that night as we had anticipated. The hours and the camels dragged themselves along with equal tardiness till towards dawn, when Mabarak created a little diversion by lying down a couple of times and breaking his halter. Then the camel following us was detached, and the remainder went plodding on past us, while we got out and prized our weary brute on to his legs, drove him back to his old position, and strung him on. The second time we came down the day was breaking, and I took the opportunity of having a good look at our camel-driver, who owned the beast we rode, and of seeing what kind of vile thing it was that had been making our lives a burden to us all night. He was, as I had noticed before, a very small, thin, old man, with a large and quite abnormally-developed Roman nose. And I now perceived that he possessed the power of giving this last the most pronounced and vigorous wag; and that, I believe, to have been the only expression his features were capable of, though it did not convey

half as much intelligence as the wagging of a dog's tail. He was barefooted, and wore the dress of all his class—a cotton shirt reaching down to his knees, bound with a hide girdle round the waist, and having loose sleeves; about a square yard of thin dressed sheepskin, doubled from corner to corner, was laid on his head, with a rope ring pressed down over it to keep it in its place; and all of him was filthy. He was armed with a short heavy throwing-spear and a cudgel with a hooked end. The usual heavy Bedawin knife was in the front of his belt.

We were now some distance behind the caravan, and as I might not have another chance, also being a firm believer in the old nautical adage that "You should always begin as you mean to go on," I made up my mind to take this fellow in hand, and give him a lesson at once. So I went quietly behind him and let him have one with the right, between the shoulder-blades, which knocked him flat on his face on the sand gasping. My companion looked perfectly astounded by what I had done, and more so when I burst into fits of loud and jovial laughter. The poor camel-

driver stood up, and first looked after his companions retreating in the distance, and then looked at me; whereupon I, laughing, lifted my hand as if I meant to repeat what I had intended for a good-humoured pleasantry; but he raised his spear, and I felt I had gone far enough. I don't know what he thought of me, but I must say I approved of the civil and cautious manner in which he approached me from that time until we parted.

When we got Mabarak on his legs I suggested that we should not remount, as we had fallen some distance behind, and would have to hurry forward. To this my companion readily assented, for a walk after the first seven hours of your journey on a camel, means little less than absolute repose. We indicated our plan to the camel-driver, and he evinced the greatest satisfaction, at once jumping up to ride himself. This was not so much to Mabarak's advantage as we had intended, but we thought it best to say nothing after what had just happened. On coming up with the caravan, I was surprised to see what a number of people were

accompanying us on foot, not counting the pilgrims, who were now dismounting for morning prayer. We shortly met the Amér and a good many of our party as we went along, and together we pushed ahead on the track about a quarter of a mile in advance of the leading camel. One of the servants followed us with a skin of water from our water-camel, and we performed our ablution and prayer, finishing before the last camel of the long line had passed us.

We always performed our prayers in this way without stopping the caravan. The country in which we found ourselves resembled in a general way the whole country through which we passed—except the open plain afterwards to be spoken of. Sandy valleys between irregular fantastic black rocky piles, varying in height from a boulder to a thousand-feet cliff. Vegetation, more or less, was to be found everywhere, but in no place except near the water was the ground as fertile as on an English grouse moor. I could not identify a dozen of the shrubs that grew in such places, and often regretted that

I had not got together a little of the right sort of knowledge; promising myself that if ever I got out of it, my shortcomings should certainly be rectified. One plant, extremely common in the desert, I must say a word about—the wild melon. The largest of these are about the size of an ostrich's egg, and in colour are exactly like the cultivated water-melon. They are so bitter as to excoriate the mouth; but camels will devour them greedily. The only other use to which they are put, is to make playthings for children. When they have been hung up for some time they become hard and light, and are used as balls, the seeds inside them making a loud rattle as they are shaken or thrown about.

After the chilly nights in the desert, the heat of the early sun is felt quite as strongly as its midday rays, and we were soon glad to return to the shade of our shugduf, notwithstanding its discomfort otherwise.

Not long after this we heard a noisy quarrel going on, a few camels ahead of us, and then Shaykh the Bo'sen came galloping past us to the

spot. The noise increased, and a few minutes later the whole caravan came to a halt. We both dismounted, and found that a man whom the Amér had hired, just before leaving Meccah, to go with him as a sort of courier, had got himself into trouble. He was a Meccah-born Hindi, a tall wiry man, about forty years of age, who was said to have made seventeen pilgrimages to Medinah, and it was expected he would act as a "Greatheart" for us. Part of his agreement with the Amér had been that no seat on a camel was to be provided for him, it being privately understood that none of us would object to his making a third on our camel, if the Bedawin in charge did not find fault. On the very first night he had managed to get up and ride all night, without the driver being aware that his camel was carrying three; but he had not been able to dismount without being found out—hence the disturbance. When I came upon the scene, Greatheart had so far forgotten himself, in the heat of a profane argument, as to threaten to strike Shaykh the Bo'sen, who was rushing off to his camel

for his sword, although he had lethal weapons enough about his person to call forth a proclamation of disarmament if he had been seen in South Africa. Anyhow, before the Shaykh returned with his drawn sword, looking very much as if he meant mischief, Greatheart bolted off and disappeared among the rocky hills. The last that we saw of our man was about two miles off, scudding over a sandy ridge towards Meccah. It may have been a "put-up thing"—indeed, I think it was, for he had been paid half of the ten dollars he was to receive for the round trip in advance. Shaykh the Bo'sen pretended to be in a great state of disappointment and wrath, and declared that the caravan should not stir until he had hurled vengeance on the offender. The Amér offered the usual salve—money! How much? "A lack of rupees,"* cried the Shaykh. To offer less would only have been to insult him. The Bedawi were delighted with the prospect of a row, and sat about in groups on the rocks discussing the matter quite cheerfully, while some of the heads

* 100,000.

among them held a council. We also held a debate. The Amér, a number of graybeards, and wealthier pilgrims assembled in a group, and deliberated several measures of advance towards the Bedawi, which, however, when tried, were scornfully repulsed.

At length, after about an hour's halt, a Bedawin, who had almost as much influence among them as the injured Shaykh himself, came up to the Amér, in the character of a wellwisher and just friend of both sides, and advised him, as it was one of his servants who had committed the offence, to try and appease the insulted Shaykh with a little present of five hundred dollars, offering to do the thing himself for the Amér in a nice delicate way, so that the Shaykh could not possibly be offended. But we had wary old birds on our side too, and he who will in future be known as our "conspirator," whispered to the Amér to put a bold face on the matter and offer him ten dollars. This the poor Amér, in great trepidation, whispered to his steward, who at once gave the Arab to understand, with his master's

authority, that the above were our terms. That Arab's glance of proud pity was well done, showing a man capable of a very superior order of dissimulation.

But he came back again and again, and after about another hour's delay consented to take fifty dollars, which settled it, and we were soon in motion again. We had had a nice experience to profit by; but I did not gain anything by it. There had been no blood spilt, and so far as I could see, had not been any chance of it. It only confirmed me in my opinion that most of the blood-curdling stories I had heard belonged to times past, and that most of the dangers of the road were imaginary.

About noon on this day we reached our first halt. It was in another level valley, similar to the one we had left the day before, but not more than about a quarter its size. There was only one well, and near it a dozen or so of Bedawin huts, standing in two rows, facing each other, with a road between them. These huts are generally about twelve feet by twelve feet, and seven feet high. They are built

of upright stakes driven into the sand, which have horizontal poles lashed across them, and to these, on the outside, a thick covering of interwoven grass, reeds, or date-fronds, is tied. On one side the hut is left completely open. Shaykh the Bo'sen and the other Shaykhs who owned camels to ride themselves, had ridden on to give notice of our coming at the village, and to lay out the camp, for now the different parties of pilgrims were to be brought together, and each Shaykh to take his own charge. As the long string of camels came in, the Bedawi directed them to different parts of the camp, and in a short time we found most of our party united, and we set to work to unload the camels and pitch our tents. Our women were not allowed to dismount until their tent was ready for them, and then their camels were led close up to the entrance, and they made a little rush into the tent. After this our next duty was to pitch our own tent, and then to place the baggage, shugdufs, and shibriyahs round each tent, enclosing an open space of about fifteen yards in diameter, opposite the entrance of each;

outside this enclosure the camels were made to lie down. There were several of these little "laagers" in the camp, and dozens of smaller parties or families who had only one or two camels, and hundreds of people who had set out to walk the whole way with us to Medinah.

The camp being put in order, our cooks at once set about preparing a meal for us. They were able to carry all their simple cooking utensils with them, and a fire lit on the sand between a few stones, to stand their pots on, differed only in its open-air character from their arrangements at home; so that department experienced little inconvenience in its own particular line from travelling. While the fires were being lit and the provisions unpacked some went off to the well to fetch water. I joined the dirvani (first warrior) and an under-cook, who were going to the village to make purchases. In each of the huts we found a Bedawin family, with a store of one kind or other of supplies for sale. One hut exposed three or four dozen fine water-melons, and in another hut lived the family of a dealer in camel-

feed; while some sold dried fish, dates, and such other supplies as the country affords, or as would be likely to be required by the pilgrims. We were some time haggling and bargaining over our shopping, and then returned heavily weighted to the camp. I went into the tent, and enjoyed four or five large slices of water-melon, which were very refreshing, and did a great deal towards banishing my seedy feeling. Cooking operations were proceeding actively, and straight columns of thin blue smoke rose up into the bright clear sky from all parts of the camp. There was a tired subdued air about everyone, which added an earnestness to the scene, and that made things look more like business than on the day before. Good-looking young Bedawin girls and boys from the village moved about the camp hawking milk, dates, firewood, and water-melons, and crying, in rather pleasant voices and quite intelligibly, the names of the articles they were vending. About an hour and a half after we came to a halt our meal of curry and rice and chupattis was ready for us, and most of us did ample justice to it. Our Bedawi—

whom we had stipulated with to pay thirty dollars for the hire of the camel for the round trip to Medinah and back to Meccah, besides two dollars for the driver, whom we were also to supply with one meal a-day, of a mixture of equal quantities of boiled rice and lentils, seasoned with a fair proportion of rancid mutton grease—received their allowance. Although there was more than they could eat, and they were allowed to help themselves to the grease, they were compelled to be dissatisfied and grumble on principle. They complained that there was too great a proportion of rice in their mixture. The beggars, too, were disappointed in our leavings. The chief cook told us that, what between the revilings of the Bedawi and the reproaches of the begging pilgrims, he did not get a wink of sleep during the halt. When the meal had been cleared away I lay down in the tent, and soon fell into a sound sleep, regardless of my position, which was made one of extreme peril by most of my companions handling and loading firearms in a dangerously inexpert manner all round me—arms about which most of them knew as much as a camel does a holiday.

CHAPTER III.

HARDSHIPS OF THE ROAD.

About two hours before sunset we were roused up by Shaykh the Bo'sen, who came to the entrance of the tent and excitedly bawled out: "Mount, mount!" as though he expected us to spring on to our camels immediately. But a look round the camp showed dozens of muffled forms lying on the sand, and still snoring in the bright sunshine or reluctantly waking themselves up. It took the Bedawi half an hour to thoroughly rouse our people and shriek a little activity into them. The third warrior and I went to settle our shugduf, which we found being used as a bed by a couple of assistant cooks, whom we quickly pulled out and sent off to pack their pots and pans.

First, we secured our blankets with twine, so that they could not possibly ruffle up under us, and then we sorted our effects and fastened them in convenient places about the inside of the shugduf, and put our smoking materials in a handy bag, also hung on the inside. I found that during the night I had lost one of a pair of spare slippers which had fallen out into the desert. I made an Arabic observation on the inscrutable ways of Providence, and gave its fellow to a beggar who wanted it badly. The camels were still munching away at their hay, which they eat while they are resting themselves. The hay carried for them is twisted up tightly into two-stranded ropes, and before it is put down as fodder it is threshed loose with a stick. This is a very convenient way of carrying hay when there are no means at hand of effectively compressing it into bales.

We also interviewed Mabarak and discovered the secret of the smell. He was, indeed, in a sad plight. On both sides of his back, extending across the spine, he carried a raw corrupting sore, resembling somewhat in form and size the part covered by the saddle

of a horse, and his driver was at that time leisurely engaged cauterising its thick callous rim with a red-hot bolt of inch iron. The operation gave out a loud hissing crackling sound, and quite a little cloud of smoke, all the time he was applying the iron. Horrifying as this spectacle was, we became accustomed to seeing it done to some camel at every stage. But Mabarak had an almost more serious trouble—his teeth. He could not masticate his food, so had to be fed by forcing large moistened balls of chopped hay and pounded date-stones down his throat. We told the Amér about our camel, and he represented our case to Shaykh the Bo'sen; but we could get no remedy. We told him the camel was not fit for the journey, but he only laughed, and said it had just come from Medinah, and had done the same journey a hundred times; and he finally clenched the argument by saying it would be impossible to get another camel till we reached Rabigh, two stages farther on, which would take us four days to accomplish.

Our start to-day was much more intelligently

conducted than on the day before, each man attending to the packing of his own property or particular charge. Shaykh the Bo'sen devoted his energies to us alone, independently of the other parties, who had their own conductors. Just as darkness set in the caravan was prepared for starting. Our portion of it, consisting of sixty-two souls, fifteen camels, one horse, and two donkeys, was placed well in advance on the line of march, which was now marshalled into the order it would proceed in for the future. On starting, a few torches were lit and carried by those on foot, while in many of the shugdufs hung lighted lamps.

The district we were now to pass through had the reputation of being peculiarly infested by robbers. As we went along, many were the oft-repeated stories of the methods and cunning of these robbers, with which my companion entertained me—how they would stalk among the rocks and shoot a camel or two out of a caravan, just as you would "shoot an antelope out of a herd;" how they had been known to come down unobserved in the darkness and mingle

with a caravan, and then, in league with the driver, untie the camel of some wealthy unsuspecting or sleeping traveller, who would know nothing until he had been dropped far behind his fellows and his camel was being made to lie down, when he would be dragged out and his throat cut, "just as you would cut a sheep's." Many were the false alarms of that night. Now and again some nervous woman or timid old man would be startled into crying out, "Thief! thief!" The cry would then be taken up along the whole line, and immediately would ensue such a fusilade, fired into the air and echoing among the hills, as suggested a regimental feu-de-joie under the dome of St. Paul's. A little past midnight, however, there occurred one of these alarms that appeared serious. The camels were brought to a standstill, and there was a general rush of foot-passengers to the rear, where the commotion had first arisen. A half-dozen of our Bedawi conductors, who were lighting the fuses of their matchlocks at a torch near me, the fitful red glare shining on them, and revealing in a murky indistinct way a rugged background of black

rock, made up a group I have seldom seen equalled for barbarous picturesqueness. Their bright piercing Bedawin eyes, under the overhanging eyebrows, looked even more piercing than common, and they wore a sinister half-amused expression, that portended anything but pleasantly for whoever they might contemplate favouring just then. The news soon came up from the rear, passed from camel to camel, that the two last camels on the line had been swept off in a sudden rush of about a dozen men from an ambush, and that they had driven the camels rapidly off into the darkness, one of the riders, a man, having been able to throw himself out of the shugduf, and escape, leaving two women and a young lad in the hands of the robbers. It appeared that nothing could be done to help them, and shortly after the caravan was put in motion. The affair gave me and my companion an animating new topic of conversation. If the man had not escaped, the third warrior, who believed the whole story implicitly, would have found me more difficult to convince. As it was, I scarcely believed

the whole thing. I could not bring myself to realise that two women and a boy were being murdered in cold blood within a milé or two of me. After daybreak Mabarak, who had providentially kept his legs all night, began to stumble about desperately, and took to his old game of lying down. We got him on his legs again and again, but the intervals between his falls became shorter every time, till at length it was evident he would never accomplish the remaining three hours of the march in company with the rest. Sick and weary, Mabarak lay down for the last time. Shaykh the Bo'sen examined him and pronounced him incurable, and after a short consultation advised the one relief left the patient. Mabarak's owner savagely drew his knife, and the brute made a movement that looked almost like presenting its throat, anxious to meet the welcome blade. Exasperatingly deliberate was the cut, as the knife passed steadily and deeply into the neck without causing a flinch.

> So the end of his longer journey had come
> In its own good time at last.

And "good time" it was that it had come. When the long neck fell supine on the sand I had worked myself up to such a pitch of compassion for the brute and contempt for the man, that I believed I saw the bright eye turned to its heartless master with a look of deep deep gratitude for the last and only act of mercy it had ever experienced at his hands.

"His end was pieces," as someone observes. The first gush of blood from the huge gash had hardly reached the sand ere the fakirs* fell upon him, and soon all the tramps in the caravan were scrambling round the carcass, stripping Mabarak's gaunt emaciated frame of such tough tissue as labour and starvation had left upon it. Those men who succeeded in securing a few strips or shreds of the flesh hung them over their backs, and the dry heat in a couple of hours converted them into light, brittle, and easily portable provender. The caravan halted for a few minutes so that our shugduf and effects might be placed on a pack-

* Religious mendicants.

camel, and then Mabarak's bare bones were left behind for the vultures to polish, as had been the case with the bones of hundreds of his family on the same road, there being no part of it where bones are not to be seen either of men or animals.

I received a message from the Amér to mount one of the donkeys. The donkey I chose turned out to be a very hard puller, so, as the pace of these large caravans is provokingly slow, even to a man on foot, I allowed my donkey to trot on ahead until we came up to the leading camel, and then got off and sat down on the sand and waited for the last camel on the line to reach me, when I would start off again, and so on.

As it was now daytime, and the ground was more open, it will be a good opportunity for describing our caravan in its entirety. There were seven hundred and thirty camels, and these extended in a long line, one behind the other, for about three-quarters of a mile. These camels carried about nine hundred pilgrims, with all their baggage. On both

sides of this line walked a wretched company of perhaps one thousand or so of men, women, and children. Many of these were possessed of funds to support themselves by the way; but far the greater number had set out quite unprovided, trusting altogether in the charity of those they accompanied. Although only our second day out, it was said that two of these people had dropped behind, which meant certain death to them; for if they succeeded in avoiding the Bedawi they must perish from thirst. Numbers already began to show signs of giving out. On the whole, it put one in a violent passion to think of the infatuation which could have led not only strong men, but delicate women and young children, to undertake a walk of five hundred miles in such a country, relying for subsistence entirely on what chance might put in their way. Yet such things are—and yearly take place in the Hejaz. To every one of our camels there was a driver, man or boy, and they, together with the Shaykhs and other Bedawi, brought our escort up to only about eight hundred *murderers*.

As the day wore on, the Amér got down from his camel and mounted the horse, a pretty iron-gray, bought in Meccah for eighty dollars. It was led with us and used only for the Amér's convenience. The only signs of game we came upon were a couple of coveys of partridges and a few small flocks of blue pigeons; but we were as yet too near to holy Meccah to think of sport. There was a difference of opinion among the seniors of our party as to whether we were right in hunting at any time during the journey; but as the Amér affected to be a bit of a sportsman, this was overruled, and we afterwards blazed away at everything that came along. The first day the breech-loading smooth-bores were brought out, Shaykh the Bo'sen was asked to give his opinion on them. He considered them flimsy gimcracks, wholly untrustworthy, by the side of his old heirloom, with its four-foot iron barrel and cotton fuse. Before we reached the camp another camel broke down, and was treated in the same way as ours had been. After having been nineteen hours on the road with-

out further accident, we reached our camping-ground. When the camp was righted and the evening meal over, all of us who slept in the tent took up our quarters, and the first part of the night was spent in long discussions on the hardships of the next three days of continuous travelling that was before us. The place in which we were now camped was deemed specially liable to the attempts of robbers.

At sundown sentries were posted all round the camp, we providing seven, four of whom were posted at our portion of the camp, and the others to the right and left protecting the sleeping pauper pilgrims near us. After sunset, if the report of a single pistol was heard it would be followed by the explosion of every firearm in the camp, and the night was about as noisy as gunpowder could make it. Sleep was out of the question with me, though most of my companions dropped off in time. Then the old "moonshi"* got quietly up and went out of the tent; there was nothing surprising in that, but shortly after I saw a hand

* The Amér's tutor.

pushed gently under the canvas and begin to draw out the moonshi's bundle. I stepped quickly over to the tent-pole and drew a sword that I knew to be sharp, and if I had not recognised the rings on his fingers I should have amputated our moonshi's right hand. As it was, I called him in and told him what he had risked in testing his security by an attempt to steal his own bundle. The old man looked startled, but his shock was nothing to the "awful caution" I received myself on this night.

Though no sentry duty had been allotted to me, two hours after midnight I still found myself wide awake, so I got up, and after removing a file of heavy dragoons from the nape of my neck, and dispersing a little army of flying artillery that had been hanging on to and harassing my rear, I set out for a stroll and a smoke. I remembered once hearing a fellow enlarge eloquently on the difficulties of returning from mess through certain sepoy lines. On this occasion I thoroughly learnt to appreciate the position. The shortest cut to

the outskirt of the camp was between our tent and that of our women. I soon recognised the curious affinity existing between the human ankle and the tent-rope, and discovered by two most conclusive and separate experiments—which, however, had been differently directed—that the human os frontal was not adapted to driving tent-pegs. I reached the cordon of feeding camels that encircled our camp, and ran the gauntlet of them, leaving only about half my tunic to be masticated, and with a "God bless you!" to the nearest sentry, went off twenty or thirty yards into the night, and sat down on a recent grave to smoke my cigarette. I then noticed two Bedawi follow me out of the camp; but as they disappeared in the darkness to my right I paid no more attention to them.

The camp presented a very wild and wide-awake appearance; numerous fires were burning throughout it, and a circle of fires, about fifteen yards apart from each other, all round the camp, were kept going by the sentries. A good deal of

motion was going on from cooking and other preparations for starting at daylight.

I had been sitting some time and had just finished my cigarette, when I heard a gentle scratching sound on the ground close behind me. I thought so little of it that at first I was inclined not to turn my head round to look; but as my cigarette was finished, I just threw the end away and gave a glance over my shoulder. It was perhaps as well I did. There, close behind me, on his knees, one hand on the sand and the other in the act of lifting a broad-bladed curved knife, crouched the form of an old graybearded Bedawin. In less than another second the knife would have been driven deep into my back, and I should have been "wiped out," probably without as much as an "Oh!" I don't ever want to get into a "tighter place." I have no recollection of the process by which we arrived at the next stage, but I know I found myself standing up facing the Bedawin, who was also standing up, at short arm's reach, with knife still uplifted. The string of my trousers had come adrift, and I was obliged

to hold them up with my left hand, and if I had closed with my man I should have had them down round my feet. I wondered why he did not strike, or do something. We must have remained in these attitudes, without either of us moving eye or hand, for fully two minutes. I cannot describe my feeling at the time as altogether *fear*. I felt the terrible disadvantage of my position—defenceless and encumbered as I was—and stood in a state of high-strung expectancy. Otherwise the feeling was one of intense wonder and disgust, at seeing before me a man who would take a fellow-creature's life as a mere speculation on the most paltry profit. My white face and unexpected actions seemed to have completely paralysed the Bedawin. I felt that I must do something to put an end to this state of things. Hard I doubled my right fist, as hard as I could squeeze it, then a quick sharp cut up, landing my man well under his long nose, bowled him over on his back and dropped the knife out of his hand into the sand. Just as he fell I saw another Bedawin, about five yards behind him, get up from

the sand where he had been lying and race off into the darkness. It was well I had no pistol, or I should have taken both their lives. As it was, I now secured the knife and then tied up my waist-band. The Bedawin lay on his back groaning, evidently thinking himself badly hurt. I gave him a hard kick in the ribs, and he then put his right hand up to his mouth and from it to his eyes. "Oh Allah!" he grunted, when he saw the blood from his nose. He could not make out what, in the name of all the prophets and patriarchs, he had been hit with, and he probably thought, judging from the blood, that his head was half off. Then it occurred to me to call out for assistance, and I wondered why I had not had the presence of mind to do so at first, when the fellow would, of course, have taken to his heels at once. Dragging him to his feet by his rather long beard, I called out to the nearest sentry that I had got a thief, and in a few minutes was relating my story to an admiring crowd of armed pilgrims who gathered round, and who looked upon the

blow I had struck with "the empty hand" as almost incredible.

We led our prisoner into the camp to be dealt with by the Amér and Shaykh the Bo'sen. In the light of the tent the dogged old wretch certainly did look a little alarming, with the blood flowing down his white beard, and smeared all over his hands and bosom. He was recognised as one of our camel-drivers. He made no excuses whatever for his conduct, and would not reveal the name of the Bedawin whom I had seen with him. The sentence passed was two hours' law, then to be shot at sight; and I promised him that I would keep a sharp look-out for him.

As we were now a camel short, it was arranged that some of those who had seats should take turns of an hour or two at riding the donkeys, so that I and my companion could ride first on one camel and then on another. Before leaving our present encampment, we filled up every vessel we had that would hold water, as we were to be two whole nights before we reached the next well, nor were we to halt

until we came to the water. That half the begging pilgrims on foot would ever get over the next stage, I could hardly believe. It was tolerably certain that we, who had a camel loaded with skins of water, besides about three gallons apiece in each shugduf, and probably thirty gallons more in the cooking-pots, would have to go very short for the last part of the march. Yet most of the pedestrians who set out to walk with us carried only a little pot of water, that would have been exhausted by evaporation in the time they required it to last them. One could not feel any real pity for these people. They expected no pity from you. *They have no word in their language to express gratitude to a man.* They regard death under torture (the form in which it would inevitably come to many of them) as an event, if not to be actually courted, certainly not to be strenuously avoided because it might happen to interfere with a few other temporary arrangements made for this life. The knowledge of this sort of thing threw a considerable damper over one's sympathy. I have given a dying creature the

draught of water that has saved his life, and heard him thank God in accents of the most heartfelt gratitude, without so much as a "Go to!" for me. If I had not given it to him he would have died; but he would have thanked God all the same!

For the first fourteen or fifteen hours we wended our way through narrow passes between high cliffs. Sometimes we passed over bare rock, up and down gentle inclines, or through ravines so narrow that two camels could not have passed. One of the camels of another party, descending a slope just in advance of us, got a fall on the rocks. Now a real fall to a laden camel is a very different thing from a lay-down: it generally means total wreck, a smashed shugduf, and often broken bones both to riders and camel. Several of us gathered round to see what damage had been done. We found the camel on its side motionless; it had sustained some injury that compelled its being abandoned. The shugduf had been knocked into a cocked hat and the cocked hat knocked into ribbons. The two old Hindi occupants crawled out

of the ruins, luckily unhurt. It was very amusing to hear the complaisant self-gratulatory way in which one of them remarked: "God takes care of good people." Some of the cliffs between which we passed rose upwards of one thousand feet, and the sky-line of some was so rectangular and the lines of fissure and stratification so parallel, that it was difficult not to fancy that you saw gigantic works of human architecture. Towards evening we entered a pass where it was said that three years before a caravan of three thousand Maghribis had been massacred by the Bedawi. This place certainly was more thickly strewn with bones than any other place we had come to as yet, and in the evening it was indeed a most gruesome scene. At daybreak I found myself on the donkey, and as the sun rose it showed us that we were leaving the rocky region and approaching a great glaring dusty plain. Every yard into that dead barren waste, with its constant flitting mirage phantoms, made you feel more dismal and insignificant than one hundred miles into the bright, sparkling, living ocean even the Red Sea itself,

with a temperature of one hundred degrees in the shade, is nothing to the desert for downright misery and helplessness. The suffering of many of those on foot had now become very great, as they crawled along, hugging the shade of the camels with bowed shoulders and tottering steps—some mutely and uncomplainingly, while others were praying loudly and grinding their teeth with thirst. Here and there a man might be seen barefoot, or with only the rags of a pair of worn-out shoes hanging on to his bruised and bleeding feet. The large varicose veins on some of the swollen legs stood out most threateningly. With a few instances of individual suffering I will pass quickly over the horrors of this march of death.

With us was a good-looking little Bombay woman and her three children, the whole of whose story I afterwards heard. Her husband had been a small trader in Bombay, and two years before he had left his wife in charge of his business, and set out on a pilgrimage to Meccah; and experiencing little difficulty in accomplishing it, his zeal had carried him

on to Medinah, but he suffered so much in health from the hardships of the journey that, finding himself out of funds, he had been afraid to venture on the return, and had written to his wife telling her that he meant to remain in Medinah for the rest of his days. On receiving this letter the plucky little woman had sold off everything she possessed, and set out to join her husband. When I first noticed her we were three days out from Meccah, and she was tramping bravely along, with the baby at her breast, and dragging two little children of four and five years old—a boy and a girl—by her side. The way that little woman bore up through the whole journey was marvellous, and her care of the three children was such that she succeeded in bringing them alive to Medinah. She would not have starved if only for the food which I procured for her; and after a time, when her case got to be known among the wealthier pilgrims, she became rather a favourite, and one of the children was often given a lift for a few hours on a camel. She was the only pilgrim in the caravan for whom I felt any compassion. She,

at all events, had a reasonable motive for her undertaking.

Some of the scenes were very sickening. One old man, whose right leg was very much swollen with elephantiasis, kept up until within about six hours of the end of our present stage, when he showed the inevitable signs of being near the end. Most of the men, as they became nearly exhausted, would stagger on ahead to the leading camel and lie down until the last camel came up to them. As sure as they began to do this it would not be long before they would give in. The old fellow I watched kept it up for a couple of hours, and then lay down for good. The last Bedawin who passed his prostrate form gave him a rouse-up prod with the butt of his spear, and a jeering recommendation to move on; but the only reply from the parched lips was a hoarse delirious prayer, and another was left behind in the desert.

All the bodies we came upon were decapitated; showing that it was quite true that the Bedawi who follow in the wake of a pilgrim caravan cut off the heads and hands of all stragglers they fall in with,

both dying and dead. By midnight on the last day of this march I do not believe there was a drop of water in the whole caravan; every drop that I knew of was either evaporated or had been drunk, and we still had thirteen hours before us, most of the time under a burning sun. I had often been longer without water under similar circumstances, but then I was strong and as full of life as a man could be. What the tortures of those who had to walk would be, I could not bear to think. I dreaded the revelations of the next day's light. When it came, however, it was some relief to see that most of the people who had managed to keep up until the night before, had been able to hang on through this night also; and one felt a hope that, now the wells were so near, most of them would surely hold out for a few hours longer. What terrible tempers we were all in, both pilgrims and Bedawi! Even the camels were more irascible than usual, and did the most extraordinary things with their long necks, to prevent our mounting or dismounting them. Several quarrels took place between the pilgrims and Bedawi, and in one scuffle that

occurred a pilgrim was wounded by a sword-cut. Also four more camels were abandoned. During the whole of the last march we had used no water for our ablutions before prayer, but had gone through the motions of them with sand instead, as the Koran allows persons situated as we were to do so.

CHAPTER IV.

HALT AT RABIGH.

After a number of false reports that Rabigh was in sight, spread by the pilgrims, who were deceived by the mirage, the Bedawi, about two hours before noon, pointed out a grove of date-palms which had appeared to spring up suddenly out of the plain a couple of miles ahead of us.

But though it looked so close when first seen, it took us two hours to reach the Turkish fort of Rabigh, a mile inland from the port, where two or three small dhows could be seen riding at anchor, and close past which, best of all, ran a broad stream of the sweetest water we had yet tasted in the Hejaz. To reach our camping-ground we had to cross this stream, and there was a regular stampede when the

water first came in sight. Even the worn camels started off into a feeble shambling trot, and could not be restrained from quenching their thirst at once. Crowds of pilgrims and Bedawi spread up and down the edge of the stream, or dabbled in it, bathing their hot inflamed feet long after the body of the caravan had moved on the two or three hundred yards farther to the camping-ground. This was a grassy open space under the walls of the Turkish fort or castle. The fort was a square building of a hundred yards on each side, the battlemented walls, thirty feet high, rising straight up from the level plain, without a ditch or other defence. But each corner of the building was flanked by a tower, mounting on its top two twelve-pounder ship's carronades, utterly useless from rust and age. There was a large gateway in the centre of the wall facing the sea. The Bedawin town numbers some two hundred huts, where fresh fish and mutton and vegetables could be procured, and the country round for a mile or two on every side was thickly studded with groves of date-palms. After the tents had been pitched and

a good supply of water and provisions brought in, we soon had a plentiful hot supper ready. As we had eaten nothing but cold boiled rice, stale chupatties, and dry dates for the last three days, the fresh fish and vegetables we were able to procure here were very welcome, and soon put us all into a comfortable good-humour. Shaykh the Bo'sen, who had reached Rabigh twenty-four hours before us on his fast camel, gave us a little news. He said that a Turkish cavalry patrol, encamped a day's march ahead of us, had had two horses stolen, and he and the other Bedawi were in great consternation, not knowing what form of reprisals to expect from the Turks. He also told us that it had been ascertained that we had lost, out of our whole caravan, fifty-two pilgrims and nine camels, taking great credit to himself for having brought our own party through with only the loss of a single camel. The Turkish soldiers annoyed me here a good deal, for my fair complexion was now rather conspicuous among the Hindis. Two or three times Turkish soldiers addressed me while walking in the bazaar. One old

officer strolling about our camp, and seeing me sitting near a fire, asked me if I was a Malay, and to save further explanation, I told him I was, and he was satisfied.

Our old incubus found us another camel here, and gave it the same name as his lost one. Our new Mabarak turned out a first-rate animal, and carried us well until we returned to Meccah. "Over a better piece of camel-flesh a man never crossed a leg." Towards evening, as the sea appeared to be quite close, a few of us went off to take a bathe; but after walking for half-an-hour, and on account of the mirage seeming to bring the water no nearer, we were afraid to venture farther from camp for fear of Bedawi, and so returned without our swim. In the evening the Amér took out the guns and shot a pair of pigeons, great numbers of which were flying about the country.

Under the Turkish guns we were considered quite safe from robbers, so that our rest need not be disturbed on their account, and as we were all extremely tired we slept well. For my part, it

was the first night's sleep I had had since leaving Meccah, notwithstanding the packs of dogs that prowled howling and yelping round the camp. Early next morning we all rose quite freshened up and in the best of spirits. The dogs we found had done us more damage than we had suffered from the Bedawi hitherto. They had got hold of a bag of dried deer-meat in the night, and consumed nearly all of it before they were discovered. The Amér, four others, and myself went out to try and make up for this loss by shooting some of the pigeons, and it was said also we might come upon a gazelle, at a spot about a mile up the stream. As I had a double gun and a dozen cartridges in the breast of my tunic I had no fear of Bedawi, and ran off a short distance to some long grass that looked a likely place, and had just turned the corner of some reeds out of sight of my companions, when I rose a brace of quail; nothing could equal the astonishment of two Bedawi, who had followed me, when they saw me take the birds right and left. They looked upon it as the act of a madman to

fire at a bird on the wing, and when they saw my birds come down, they went off and told of the feat all over the village. The Amér and the rest of our people seldom ventured to try a shot at anything in motion if they could stalk close up to it on the ground, and afterwards I thought it better to imitate them, as I had no wish to get my name up. We were shooting for the pot, and we made a good bag out of the flocks of pigeons, sometimes dropping six or seven at a volley. Before breakfast we had bagged sixteen-and-a-half pairs of pigeons, a brace of partridges, and my quails.

After that we had the rest of the day before us to do as we liked, for we were not to start until night. Some of the party took opium and went to sleep, while I went for a walk in the village. I found my fame had gone before me, and I heard the Bedawi telling one another of the wonderful shot I had been seen to make that morning. What with the blow I was said to have struck with the "empty hand" and my flying

shots, I felt I was bringing myself into far too great prominence. But from my return to camp that afternoon the tide turned, and my luck set steadily against me for some time. Feeling actively idle and having nothing to do, I took it into my head to have a change of diet and do a little cooking on my own account. First I thought I would have a pigeon-pie with potatoes in it; but the cook said the potatoes had cost a piastre each, and were especially for the Amér's Englishisttoo* and muttinicutillets,† and that he would not let me have any of them *to spoil.* So I went to the Amér and asked him if he would like me to prepare him a dish that was a great favourite among sailors, very simple and nice, and as easy to make in the desert as on board-ship.

He at once told the chief cook to give me every facility for making it. As I date the beginning of my troubles from that pudding, I think the reader should know what it was like. Among our stores we had

* Irish stew, and very bad Irish stew.

† Mutton cutlets, also very bad.

flour and treacle, and the idea I had was to make a rolly-poly—nothing could be easier, one would suppose. But then the chief cook, who considered himself one of the greatest artists in his line to be found in India, and who believed the dish did not exist which he could not prepare (even down to such a foreign kickshaw as "cake"), very much resented my interference, and insisted on making the pudding himself under my directions. But I found him so intractable that, after a few preliminary instructions, I gave him up, and thought no more about him or the pudding, but went and employed myself more usefully in getting our dismantled shugduf in order for our new camel. As soon as it was ready I lay down in it and began smoking heavily, a plan I always found to banish my cravings for un-come-at-able food. I saw the supper carried into the tent, and was just thinking of taking my place at the cloth, when a cry of alarm from the tent brought me to the spot at the double-quick. Dismay was on every face, and the chief cook, standing in speechless agony, pointed

first to me, as I entered, and then to the pudding on the dish in the middle of the cloth. He had tried his hand at my pudding after all, and what had been the result? With oriental ingenuity, he had contrived to impart an air of absolute ferocity to an otherwise comparatively docile and harmless—so far as I have heard—rolly-poly, as it lay curled up on the dish ready for a spring. It was not bigger than a wild cat, but in looks it exactly resembled a mad rhinoceros. All looked to me to rescue them, and I promptly seized a large iron spoon and dealt the pudding a stunning blow in the midriff; but the weapon glanced off its polished hide. With a second well-aimed blow I broke its back and finally disabled it. Every countenance expressed the joyous relief that was felt. The wound in the pudding disclosed, among other irregularities, that the cook had omitted such trifles as the treacle and suet. Still, I thought it might be eaten; so, putting a good face on the matter, I reflected a flap of its integument with a scimitar, and, by means of some gun-cotton detonating car-

tridges, succeeded without much difficulty in detaching portions of the interior substance. *Nunc oblavi ad gravum.* The pudding was a failure, and I got the whole blame of wasting four pounds of flour, an article we were running short of. However, it was not a very serious matter, and we made a meal out of the other good things on the cloth.

Our halt had now come to an end, and we must prepare for putting off into the desert again at sunset. Most of the begging pilgrims had been able to secure a rich supply of broken victuals, and with plenty of water at hand and the use of the fires of such as were able to buy firewood, they had not fared badly during our last halt, and now set out cheerfully, knowing that the worst of our journey was over. I had become so used to the motion of the camel that I dropped off to sleep for short intervals two or three times during the night. The moon was now growing old, and we had bright moonlight for the greater part of the night, revealing the numerous skeletons of camels

by the wayside in a very ghastly manner, but altogether much improving our condition. The camels, which had hitherto moved in one long line, were split up into shorter strings, and travelled now two or three, and sometimes four, lines abreast in the parallel beaten paths over an undulating stony plain. We had taken up a good supply of torches at Rabigh, and great numbers of these were kept burning all night. It was easy to procure a light for your hookah by calling the nearest torchbearer. Of water we had more than enough to last us, so that we need not stint ourselves; besides having some to spare for any beggars who might seem to want it badly towards the end of the march; and we again began to perform ablutions before praying.

At daylight we sighted another caravan on the distant horizon, approaching us. The two caravans came nearer and nearer, and at last passed one another, just as ships would at sea, within hailing distance. We spoke them, and they proved to be the returning Malays from Medinah. This might

have been known from its orderly condition. There was not a single pedestrian attached to the caravan except the Bedawi camel-drivers.

At noon we camped. This time we pitched our camp in a pleasant little green valley, near a spring and running brook, from which the distant hills were just visible to the north-east. The inhabitants of the village in this valley were said to be the worst robbers to be met with along the whole road, so we took precautions accordingly. As we were to remain in this valley until morning, sentry duties had to be allotted for the night. I was told that my turn would come on at midnight and last until morning prayer at daylight. The day had not been painfully hot, a nice light breeze from the sea having set in shortly after daybreak, falling away at sunset, and the night promised not to be as cold as usual.

Everything went smoothly and regularly, and I was beginning to think that desert travelling need not be so bad after all.

After sunset the shoutings and volleys of musketry

kept up to scare marauders did not keep me awake long. When I was called to take my post at midnight, I found I had been enjoying a most comfortable sleep, and was rather disgusted at having to muffle up and go out and walk about with the cold barrel of a rifle in my hands. I considered it the greatest humbug. I knew there was not a man in camp who had the slightest intention of shooting anything when he fired his piece, or who would for a moment have resisted an armed Bedawin if he had walked into the camp and walked out with a load of plunder in the open daylight. The man I had to relieve was the third warrior, one of the most sensible men in the camp. He not only hurried me out quickly, but when he gave me the rifle it was not loaded. I asked him if he had any cartridges. He said: "Why do you want to waste ammunition; are there not fools enough doing that all round you?"

But I was in a bad humour, and had made up my mind that if I had any cause to fire the rifle I would hit the object, Bedawin or not. So I took

a couple of rounds out with me, and loaded as soon as I got to my post. I walked up and down on my beat for a few turns, and took a drink of cold water to get myself thoroughly awake, and then sat down by my fire and occupied myself by throwing little bits of dry wood into it and making blazes. I must have been keeping some sort of a look-out—probably from an old habit of watchfulness acquired on night-watches at sea—for, during one of the brighter flashes of flame from my fire, I fancied I saw a dark object creeping along the ground about twenty yards off. I jumped to attention and watched its movements closely. There could be no mistake about it, a low black object was moving rapidly from bush to bush, and coming a little nearer to my post at every change of place. "Whatever you are you're up to no good," I thought, "so here goes;" and the next time it showed in the open I tried a snap-shot. The object stopped dead, and the low whine it gave told me I had shot a dog. In the commotion that followed the report of my rifle, nobody tried to find out who had fired the first shot. I

said nothing about my little exploit at the time, and the dog remained until daylight, when it was found; and I was greatly blamed for my rashness, especially when I told the Amér I was sorry it was not a Bedawin.

CHAPTER V.

WOUNDED.

We were to have "Englishishtoo" for breakfast. Now, of all our *cuisinerie*, this was the only dish for which I had the slightest relish, and whenever we had it I used to so manage that I came in for a good share. I was obliged to do this in an underhand way, as it would never have done for me to show an open preference for such a notoriously European dish. Nobody in the party liked it, and, although the cook put about three times the proper proportion of pepper into it, everyone but the Amér declared that it had "neither taste nor smell." The Amér only pretended to like it because the dish had been a fashionable novelty when he left India, and he did not wish to appear

behind the times, even in the desert, where, moreover, potatoes had the recommendation of being extremely expensive. This time I took myself out of the way when the meal appeared, and did not return until it had been over for some time. I then went to the cook and asked him what he had to eat, and he told me there was nothing but "Englishishtoo" left. This was what I had expected, for I knew that nobody took more of it than they could help—just a mouthful or so out of compliment to the Amér's supposed taste for it. I pretended to be dissatisfied, but told him to give me a good plateful, as I was very hungry; and I asked him if he could not scrape up some rice besides. This he did for me; and I took my two plates off behind a pile of boxes, and sat down on the sand to enjoy a most extensive blow-out.

Not far from me an old Bedawin was just finishing a most revolting surgical operation on a camel. I did not mind that. I could stand a great deal in those days. I only congratulated myself on the success of my little scheme, and put my

first potato eagerly into my mouth with that sensation of real pleasure only to be experienced by an Irishman who had not tasted the national tuber twice for the last six months. At this crisis I saw the Bedawin just mentioned walking quickly towards me, wiping his filthy hands on his offensive matted head of hair. The astonishing circumstance of a Bedawin *cleaning* his hands should have warned me; but no! before I could draw the plate away or do anything to prevent him, this "proud son of the desert" had dived his loathsome paw slap into the middle of my *bonne bouche*. I could stand a great deal in those days, but I could not stand that. He was so overcome by the way I pressed the remainder of the mess, plate and all, on him that he had to sit down. In fact, from the hasty manner in which he dashed the scalding stew from his face and chest, I gathered that he felt rather pained, and was relieved to notice that he was unarmed, and not at all sorry to see him rush away swearing vehemently. I was more than disappointed; but after relieving my mind a little

after the manner of the Bedawin, I was fain to sit down and appease my hunger the best way I could on the remaining rice. I then employed myself for a short time cleaning the two plates. All the plates carried in the desert are made either of tin or copper, and however much water may be at hand you never think of washing them. They are always cleaned with sand, which serves the purpose almost better than water; for you can rub them with handfuls of dry clean sand until they glisten, and not a grain of the sand will stick to them. I cleaned the two plates to my satisfaction, and laid them on the sand to admire them shining in the sun for a moment, and then stooped to pick them up, when—I knew what had happened—some narrow steel instrument had been driven into the back of my right thigh and, striking hard against the bone, had glanced off and passed out at the front. I felt that it had not been thrown, for it had received two distinct impulses forward; and as I felt that it was withdrawn, being sure of a second thrust, I staggered forward, and, facing round,

regained my left leg standing. I saw the man who had just shared my pot-luck running away backwards and looking at me, flourishing his spear and laughing loudly in an unmistakable that's-got-you-my-boy tone of voice.

I have experienced greater pain from a slighter wound, but I never felt anything like the sudden depression* of spirits that the sight of the stream of blood flowing down my leg brought on. I dropped instantly on the sand, and stretching myself out I pressed my right hand over the wound at the back, and tried to stop the blood. I then called out to the third warrior (my camel-mate—about the most reliable man in the camp) to bring me the rifle and a cartridge, as I wanted to show him something.

He heard me, and replied: "What do you want? To shoot another dog?"

"No. In the name of God, come; I believe I'm killed."

* The depression was actual cardiac syncope or collapse, from sudden and profuse loss of blood.

This brought him at once.

"Oh Allah!" he exclaimed, when he saw the blood.

I asked him to lend me the rifle, and then set the sight at two hundred yards and handed it back to him, pointing out the Bedawin still flourishing his spear triumphantly at about that distance off. He took the rifle and tried a shot. I think he meant it; the bullet must have gone very near, for the fellow ducked as if he had been hit, and then bolted off and disappeared among a grove of date-palms. The thing had taken place in an out-of-the-way corner, behind a pile of boxes, and no one had seen it done; but now a crowd collected from all quarters, making the greatest fuss round me. I asked some of them to carry me near to my shugduf, and half-a-dozen laid hold of me and deposited me there in no time. I then asked for my bundle, and, with the assistance of the third warrior, tore up some of my cotton clothes into bandages. And now I found that the spear had not passed out at the front as I thought; but there was

a round dark red blotch on the upper part of my thigh, that showed that the point of the spear had come nearly through.

Though the wound in the back of the thigh would just admit the little finger, and everybody's plan was tried, and all sorts of advice taken, we found it impossible to stanch the bleeding. Large pads of lint were scraped up and tied tightly over the wound with bandages; still in a few minutes the blood would begin to ooze out and fall in quickly succeeding drops on the sand. Two hours after I received the wound all my cotton clothes—seven pieces, each about the size of a white shirt—had been torn up, and were saturated with blood until they looked like a mass of raw flesh.

One by one the crowd that had been standing near me went about their business, with looks that said plainly: "No more can be done for him."

I felt myself getting very weak. It was maddening to think that I might die in that place, all through not being able to stop such an absurd

little leak. I got into quite a rage thinking about it. I swore at the third warrior, and told him if he could do nothing for me to go away with the rest of them. I then tried my strength, and found I could not rise up into a sitting posture without feeling faint and dizzy. I then lay down quietly, and the third warrior came and put his bundle under my head, and sat down near me holding my right hand in his. He was the only one now staying by me, and I derived a certain amount of comfort from even his company; besides, he was able to give me the water, of which I was drinking a good deal, and brush off the swarms of flies that gathered over me as I lay.

After a time, as I lay on the sand, the blood still oozing slowly through the thick layers of bandages and lint, I took to contemplating the possibility of my dying, but only in a vague sort of way. I do not think, in the bottom of my heart, I believed that I should die; but, at the same time, it looked seriously like it. My companion at my side was giving me his ideas of

the heaven to which I was straightway going—"a little bit invented and a little bit inferred." I think I must have had a good deal of hope left somewhere, for I was able to turn my head away and smile when he gave me a graphic delighted account of one of the angelic operations I was to undergo before attaining to a glorious beatitude: it sounded so very like instructions for cleaning a fish. I foresaw that if I went on getting weaker at the rate I was, I should not be able to double my fist soon. Then I saw the preparations for starting the caravan going on round me, and a horrid notion that I might be left in the desert alive came over me, and I felt almost the same sensation as when I first saw the blood streaming down my leg. I thought then that I had better try and do something to let my fate be known at home, if I should not get out of this scrape. The British Consul knew that I was in the country, and I had given him the address of my friends in England. I asked the third warrior to give me a piece of paper and pencil he would

find in my bundle. He gave them to me, and I, with some difficulty, wrote on the paper:

"First munsel * beyond Rabigh.

"SIR,

"The bearer of this will give further information. No blame whatever to anyone.

"J. F. K."

"To H. B. M. Consul, Jeddah."

I rolled this note up and put it between my teeth, and then asked the third warrior if he would promise me to give it to the British Consul after I was dead; but if I recovered, to give it back to me when I asked for it.

"Why do you want to send a letter to that nassara?"† he said.

I told him then that I might easily tell a lie that would satisfy him; but that, as I was probably dying, I would prefer him not to ask me, but just do as I requested, without more talk. He

* Stage. † Christian.

promised he would do it, in such a way that I thought I could trust him; so I gave him the note instead of swallowing it, as I had intended to if he had made any difficulties. I was a good deal more exhausted after that; but, without having any definite hope, I felt much easier in my mind. I thought my hands looked just like a washer-woman's, and noticed two or three vultures wheeling round high up in the air above me. I became aware of people standing over me and looking at me, but I did not care to see who they were; and after that I must have died—

For dying I could die no more.

But I no more remember losing consciousness than you, reader, remember the precise moment at which you went to sleep last night.

* * * * *

The first sense that returned to me was taste, a pleasant, sweet, cool taste. I felt something being put into my mouth which I swallowed; and in time

I remembered what had happened, and began to wonder where I was, but was not sufficiently interested to open my eyes to look. I knew that my burning thirst was being quenched by someone putting little bits of water-melon into my mouth, which was very pleasant, so I went on swallowing them as fast as I could get them down. Gradually I felt the motion of a camel under me, and opened my eyes. I was lying on my back in the shugduf, and my old friend, the third warrior, was sitting on the opposite side, cutting up a water-melon into little squares and reaching over and feeding me with them. I tried to speak, but found myself very weak; however, I did just manage to ask where I was. He told me we were about to halt, and that it was fourteen hours since I had spoken. It was coming to life from the dead. I was sure I was saved. I never felt so happy before, nor probably ever shall again. I went on eating the delicious water-melon for perhaps half an hour, and then the camel was made to kneel down, and the shugduf lifted carefully off his back

with me in it. I was then left alone for some time.

I suppose I went to sleep, for the next thing I remember was the Amér and a few other people standing round me, and the third warrior removing the blanket that was covering my body and legs. I shall never forget that sight of myself—smirched and smeared from head to foot with blood which had dried black and brown, and I looked as thin as a cholera corpse.

"Wash me," I said, and as they were lifting me out of the shugduf I fainted. I remember little for the next day or two except eating water-melon. I must have slept the greater part of the time. No mother or wife could have nursed me with greater care than did the third warrior, and I soon began to get stronger. It was on the second day after coming to that I asked the third warrior to rub a piece of meat with salt and roast it in the hot ashes, which he did, and I ate about half a pound of lean mutton. After that I soon began to get better, and developed an appetite like a hyena, and was able to talk away

to my camel-mate as we rode along or lay in our shugduf during the halts. If there had been any blood left in my body, the tale he had to tell me must have frozen it. It appeared that when I went off, everybody in the camp thought I was dead. As the caravan was on the point of starting, and there was no time for ceremony, it was proposed that they should just scrape a hole in the sand, put me in and cover me up. This plan the third warrior stoutly opposed, saying he did not think I was dead, and if I was, it would only be Mohammedanlike to carry me on to the next stage and "bury me decent." As he was the only one of the party who held these opinions, the majority would certainly have put me under the sand in a few minutes if it had not been for Shaykh the Bo'sen. With the Bedawi I had always assumed an air of careless recklessness, never "putting in my spoke" when they were squabbling with my companions, and had always allowed myself to be directed by them when working at loading or unloading the camels. This behaviour of mine, without my knowing it, made me a great favourite

with them. So that when Shaykh the Bo'sen saw how badly I was wounded, he had jumped up on his camel and sped off to a neighbouring village where lived a hakim,* with a great name and practice, leaving orders before going that the starting of the caravan should be delayed until his return. He returned, with the hakim mounted behind him, just as some of my friends had begun to dig my grave. When the leech saw me he pronounced me alive, examined my wound, and quickly applied a Bedawin styptic, and declared that with quiet, great care, and water-melon diet, he had every hope of my ultimate recovery.

What would the reader suppose this desert doctor's fee was? *A guinea!*† The Amêr gave it to him grumbling, I heard, and then gave the third warrior leave to take charge of me and put me on our camel.

On the third day after the wound the bandages began to get itchy and irritating, so that at our next halt I had myself lifted out of the shugduf and took off the bandages.

* M.D. † The English guinea is a common coin in the Hejaz.

Considering the heat of the weather and the many other unfavourable circumstances, the wound was progressing most favourably, and after a good wash it looked extremely healthy and clean. I took out of it a plug of raw cotton, that smelt strongly of common turpentine. I believe that that was the styptic which the hakim had applied, and it could have been procured in Meccah quite easily. It has, I believe, the advantage of being strongly antiseptic. So that my Bedawin hakim, undoubtedly original, appeared to be a sort of desert "Lister." From that time forward the treatment I employed for my wound was a daily wash in lukewarm water and the application of a greased bandage. It improved so rapidly, and I so speedily regained strength, that the day on which we reached Medinah, six days after receiving my wound, I was able, with the assistance of two of my companions, to walk into the town.

For the greater part of the night before we came to Medinah we had been ascending stony rugged paths, on which several worn-out camels

had come to grief. We had seen the loom of the lights from the town in the sky for some time before the day broke. In the glowing imaginations of my companions it had been deemed the heavenly light said to direct the pilgrims' steps, from three days' distance, towards Medinah. Just as the sun rose we had surmounted an ascent, from which we saw spread out, five hundred feet below us, a level plain several miles in extent, and in the middle of this plain, reposing against the black rocky ridge of a mount, suddenly burst on our view the city of "Medinah the Honoured." The hill, or small mountain, rises abruptly from the plain, and the outlines of the city are egg-shaped, with the distant side of its small end against the hill, under "the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."

CHAPTER VI.

MEDINAH.

MEDINAH, when first sighted, may fairly be ranked with Constantinople from the Sea of Marmora, or anyone of the loveliest of the beautiful cities of the world. As seen from the distant birdseye point of view to which it first presents itself to the pilgrim's delighted gaze, its tall, snow-white, uninterrupted walls and numerous gilded minarets, with the morning sun gleaming over them, and the broad green belt of cultivated ground encircling it—as seen, I say, at such a time, by the way-worn pilgrim from Meccah, it is a fresh bright jewel, bounded by a vast grim barrenness of desert, an opal and pearl mosaic set in a brilliant border of shining green enamel. What a moment it was to

many of us! The one aspiration of many of their lives was now accomplished. There, beneath them, reposing in the bosom of the plain, lay their goal, "Medinah the Honoured," the tomb of the Prophet, by whose side they could now lay down their weary bones to rest for ever; nor cared they how soon, in their certainty of eternal bliss.

To others of us what a glad sight it was too, after days and nights of perpetual forward, forward, yet scarcely seeming to make any advance over the drear dry miles of rocky arid desolation, to see before us the end of our apparently interminable journey at last—Medinah, which should have been named the fortunate. Walled habitations, green fields, running water, every blessing the Eastern mind could desire, were there. When first Medinah came in view the whole caravan burst into the most extravagant expressions of praise and thanksgiving to God for their deliverance from their recent perils, and for their safe arrival at their destination. Even the poor camels lifted their long drooping necks, and strained their utmost to increase

their pace into a feeble staggering attempt at a "run in" at the finish.

And now most assuredly the gait of our camels kept time to that "needless Alexandrine" from Pope's "Essay on Criticism," that

Like a wounded snake drags its slow length along.

There! it's been drummed into my ears ever since I left Meccah. I've heroically abstained, but it would out, and I must say I feel better.

Dismounting from my camel to walk into Medinah, as others did, was of course out of the question for me.

After descending to the valley, we passed over half-a-mile of sand, which gradually merged into a grassy plain; and over this the road led for about two miles up to the gate of the city, where we arrived about an hour from the time when we had first seen it. We halted close outside the gate, on an open space surrounded by Bedawi huts, and unloaded the camels, but did not form any regular camp. Crowds of Arabs came out of the city to

offer lodgings and sell eatables to the pilgrims, and altogether the scene became one of almost as great animation as on the day we left Wady Fatima.

The Amér and most of our party went at once into the town to find a suitable house for us, and another for the women. The third warrior stayed with me, and assisted me out of the shugduf. I lay down on my blankets on the ground while he packed up our bundles. I told him that I had decided to make an attempt at walking into the town with his assistance, and I took the opportunity of asking him to give me back the little bit of paper I had given him, with my message to the Consul at Jeddah written on it. He soon produced it from the folds of his cumberbund, and I was in the act of tearing it up, when I changed my mind, and have preserved it ever since. Very vividly it recalls the scenes among which it was written.

The little Hindi woman and her children came to me to give me a farewell. She looked "in pitiful case;" but she was so happy at having

reached the end of her journey, and at her prospects of soon meeting her husband, that she did not seem to be aware of the sore state of her feet and her swollen legs. I borrowed a rupee from the third warrior and gave it to her, and he gave her half a rupee himself. I afterwards heard that she found her husband keeping a small tea-stall, and doing very well. He must have made a good deal out of our custom while we were in Medinah, for our people went to his stall regularly.

I had no opportunity of seeing my little dark heroine again; but her bright brave face, during the whole of her terrible tramp, will always dwell in my memory. I never expect to meet with a better instance of the devotion of a wife and mother, though she was only one of those women of the East who are "kept in such degradation and ignorance" (?).

About noon—the house having been settled upon—we began to move into it; and I should have begun to dress myself, but my under-clothing had all been torn up for bandages, or was defiled

with blood; in which state it was unclean, and could not be worn. Certainly, I thought, I left Meccah with "nothing but rags to my back," but I shall be returning "without a rag to my back." I borrowed a cumberbund from one of my companions, and, enveloping myself in my huge camel-hair cloak, I went in through the gate, leaning on two of my companions. After half-an-hour's walking through the streets, with an occasional rest, we reached the house. The streets through which we had come were all, fortunately for me, perfectly level. They were clean, and kept in very good order indeed for an Eastern town. There is a general air of prosperity about the place and its inhabitants that gives a very favourable impression to a new arrival: even the dogs look less mangy and hungry than in other Mohammedan towns.

The rooms we had taken were on the ground-floor of a large house, near the centre of the city, the door opening into a garden of about a quarter of an acre of date-palms. In the middle of this

garden was a fine large well, full to the very brim with delicious cool water, looking dark and deep, and so fresh, with the green weeds floating on it, that it made one long for just one plunge.

I was extremely weak, and beginning to suffer a great deal of pain, so that I was compelled to go at once into the house. The room we had taken was a splendid hall—nothing less. Across the middle of the hall passed a broad paved passage; two feet below the level of the floor on each side of it, and in the middle of this lower portion of the room, was a circular stone basin of water, twelve feet in diameter, and self-supplying. Directly over this basin was an opening, between the rooms of the upper storeys, that led up to a large open skylight in the roof of the house. For light and coolness no arrangement could have been better. The raised portions of the room were matted over with a good grass mat, and the walls were cleanly whitewashed. The whole chamber looked much too wholesome and bright for us after what we had been accustomed to in Meccah.

In a corner of the room I lay down on my blanket, and the third warrior, who had seen me in, then left me to go and indulge in a big ablution, and attend to his religious duties in the Haram, as all the others of our party were now doing. As fast as they came back from the Haram, they all set to work washing again. How I envied them as I heard them sousing their skins, parched and cracked, over and over again with large vessels of water! The Amér spent all the day, when he was not at his prayers, having alternate hot and cold water baths. The splashing and laughing round the well in the garden was kept up until late on in the night. My wound was very troublesome, and I feared that my exertion of the morning had thrown it back. It was so painful that I was obliged to take a little opium that night before I could go to sleep. When I dressed my wound next morning it did not look bad, and I was able, with the help of the third warrior, to go out into the garden and have a good bathe, which had a most beneficial effect.

We were to remain ten days in Medinah, and that

would allow us fifty prayers in the Haram. But I thought it quite probable that I might have to leave Medinah without performing a prayer in the Haram at all. I might, after all my hardships, and after having actually been in Medinah, fail in attaining the object of my journey. No! I was determined I would see the tomb. For the first week I lay fretting and fuming on the floor. But after a week, at the times of prayer, when all my companions were away in the Haram, I would stand up and try to walk a little with a stick, and after a couple of days of this I felt confident that I should be able to go through the rites and ceremonies of a first visit to the Haram, as they are not very tedious. On the ninth day I determined to make the effort.

A good many visitors came in daily to pay their respects to the Amér, and we had daily calls from a number of date merchants with samples of their fruit. One of these told me that there were fifty varieties of date cultivated in Medinah. "The shelibi is the finest, and is very much valued all over the East. It is said that it cannot be brought to perfection

anywhere except at Medinah. It is a very large and delicious date. The Amér purchased nearly half a ton of picked fruit of this sort. The next best date is a small one, no larger than a medium-sized gooseberry. It has no stone in it, or only a rudimentary stone like a little bit of straw, which cannot be noticed in eating the fruit.

Than Medinah, I suppose that a more flourishing little city is not to be found anywhere in the East. It has a population of about twenty thousand inhabitants, probably two-thirds Arab, the rest being Turks and a small proportion of foreign residents from most other Mohammedan countries. The houses are built of the same materials as in Meccah, but are nowhere to be seen in the same dilapidated and neglected condition. I should think that the masonry and plaster is more easily kept in repair on account of the abundance of water in the district, which must induce a more uniform temperature than exists in Meccah. Under the ample fructifying solar heat, the well-watered suburbs of Medinah produce an endless variety of vegetables and fruits. A list of a day's supplies from

the market would comprise perhaps all the following articles: Onions, garlic, carrots, beetroot, radishes, beans, cucumbers, and very fine grapes. In short, almost everything that can be thought of will grow about Medinah, together with such cereals as maize, wheat, and barley.

One of our daily visitors was the chief eunuch of the Haram, a very old infirm negro, who used to sit for hours telling us stories and traditions of the tomb. One of his stories, though well known in the East, may not be so well known to my readers. It relates to the only time the grave of Mohammed has been entered by a living mortal since the Prophet was buried there.

"One day"—these two words are a literal translation of the words with which the eunuch began his story, for the rest, I only remember the substance of the narrative, so must give it in my own words. "One day," a great many years ago, the attendants of the Haram noticed a most noisome smell emanating from, in or about, the Prophet's Tomb. Many days were spent in the most assiduous searching round

the outside; but nothing could be found from which the smell could be thought to originate. At last a few of the moolahs* began reluctantly to admit the possibility of an impurity existing inside (though all had been unanimous in denying this at first), for the smell had undoubtedly been traced to a small aperture in the wall of the tomb. Conjecture ran rampant, and the controversy among the lights of the faith reached an appalling height. Still, all the learning of all the greatest minds of the day could not explain away that smell; it not only remained, but it was ever getting worse. One unorthodox Persian suggested the heretical thought that the Prophet himself had gone bad. He was put to such tortures that he craved to be torn to pieces with red-hot pincers as a happy release.

This wholly unexpected view, hinted at by the Persian, had the effect of uniting the wise men, though they themselves were prepared to believe the smell nothing less than the "odour of sanctity" itself, if it came to that. It would not do for

* D.D.'s.

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such an opinion as the Persian's to get about and pass unrefuted. They saw the urgency of the case, and felt what terrible things unkind people might say. In a great council of moolahs, assembled from all parts of the earth, to consider this matter of the smell, a decision was come to and acted upon as follows:

The goodest good little boy that could be found, active enough to get through the hole in the wall of the sepulchre, was put into training; that is to say, was put through a course of ablutions and fastings for his extra purification, and then sent into the tomb. The boy came out again in a very short time with a dead pigeon, the cause of the smell, in his left hand, and he was found to have been struck deaf and dumb and blind. Many years passed, and the boy became an old man, and was just at the point of death, when his senses suddenly returned in time to allow him to relate these facts and expire: When he had entered the tomb he had found it brilliantly lighted, and seen sitting in the middle the Prophet with the Koran

on his knees, and an angel on each side of him reading to him. The angel on the right of the Prophet rose up as he entered and introduced himself as Gabriel, and taking hold of his left hand closed it over the dead pigeon, and showed him out so politely that he never suspected the dreadful calamity that had befallen him until he found darkness on the outside and he had tried to speak.

CHAPTER VII.

THE HARAM.

At noon on the day before we left Medinah I set out to visit the Haram. I found that, though my leg was very stiff, I was quite able to walk slowly along to the nearest gate, not more than three hundred yards from our house. The level of the interior of the building is exactly the same as that of the street outside. Entering by the north-east gate there are no steps, but you walk straight in over a paved entrance, and find yourself under domed colonnades, enclosing an open gravelled square, eighty yards by fifty. Near the middle of this square there is a small railed-in patch of green, with a few palms and creepers growing on it, and spread over the square were flocks of blue-rock pigeons, feeding quite tamely among the feet of

the passing worshippers. The colonnades are about thirty feet high and forty feet wide, and are roofed with three rows of small domes. This domed ceiling is supported by three rows of round pillars, and the pavement is composed of large smooth flagstones. The western arcade is set apart for the women to pray in, and is shut in from the square by a close wooden lattice-work. Walking round the eastern side of the building, you find it extends for another forty yards beyond the square, and that that part of it is completely roofed in. This roof is supported on from one hundred and sixty to one hundred and seventy round pillars, each about eighteen inches in diameter. The ceiling is divided into twelve rows of thirteen blue painted domes, and the floor is laid with marble flags, the greater part of it being richly carpeted. Near the centre of this covered-in portion of the building are two stone pulpits, plain hexagonal stone pedestals, with steps leading up to them. About twenty-five feet of the north end of the building is railed off from the rest, and placed all about are numerous gilt candlesticks and glass chandeliers.

Most of the stone work in the interior of the building is painted a light stone colour, and over many parts chapters from the Koran in gold and black letters may be seen. The whole place has a tawdry "dirty-flash" appearance, very different from the grand simplicity of the Haram at Meccah.

Being shy "of those who choose the chief seats in the synagogue," I took a seat as far from the pulpit as I could get without going into the sun, and sat down to wait for the noonday service. I had now time to observe the congregation as they assembled: more than half were Hindis, the rest being natives, with a few Turks and Persians. With the exception of a few Hindis and negroes, they all looked much more respectable and clean than a similar congregation would in Meccah. I do not believe they are a bit more honest for all that. We suffered several losses from theft while in Medinah. The Amér had the silver clasps cut off the back of his sword-belt, while he was praying in the Haram. The Medinah Arab has generally a darker complexion than his Meccah brother, his mien is much more

sedate too, and his manner towards foreigners very dignified.

While I was sitting waiting for the imam to begin the service, an old Turkish officer came and sat down next to me, and seeing a new face that looked like a countryman's, he tried to get into a conversation with me. I might have found him troublesome if the sermon preceding the prayer had not soon begun. As it was, I shut him up with a rebuke for not attending to the words of the preacher, though we were too far off to hear what he said. The prayers over, I remained sitting counting my beads until the crush had subsided. Alone in that nest of fanatics, wounded and helpless, I felt anything but at home; I felt, I thought, like a dove in a hencoop, as I remembered the appearance of a poor little bedraggled pigeon that had been blown off to our vessel at sea, and so harboured by us. Properly, on my first visit to the Haram I should have had someone with me who knew the routine of the place, and could recite the proper prayers for me to follow him. I had coached

myself pretty well, but now that it came to the point I rather hesitated, and wished that I had kept with one of my companions who knew me. Just at that moment the landlord of the house we were staying in passed me, and I called him to me and asked him to lend me his arm and be my guide. Now our landlord had been guilty of certain petty larcenies: he had several times come into our room at prayer-time, when everyone was away, and pocketed a few handfuls of dates and other little eatables, and I had connived at this by pretending to be asleep; but on one occasion I let him know that I saw him at it, and tipped him a wink that I would say nothing. So that when I asked him to do me a little favour he could not well refuse; and I was glad I got him, for he was a well-known man, rather a swell Arab.

The tomb is near the south-east corner of the building; and is a rectangular erection, twenty-five feet by twenty of plain square-cut sandstone blocks, and on the roof of the building immediately over the tomb is a large pear-shaped dome. It is quite unornamented,

except on the south side, which has a front of open fretwork in brass, in which are three round holes, on a level with the eye, equidistant from one another, and large enough to admit the arm to the shoulder. Against the hole, supposed to be opposite the grave of the Prophet, I placed my eye, and, when I had become accustomed to the darkness, I saw, about four feet off, a stone wall with five red screens hung on it, of a size that would suggest their covering small doorways—that was all there was to be seen. These screens are said to bear the names of the people whose graves they are over, in the following order, beginning at the left: Mahommed, Abubekr, Omar —the first three Caliphs—Fatima, Mohammed's daughter-in-law, and the fifth is for Isa-bin-Maryam,* after his next appearance on earth.

Imitating others, I thrust my arm as far into one of the holes as I could force it, and waved it about a moment or two inside, that it might absorb by contact the more of the hallowed excellence therein, then withdrew it and retired. After a few

* Jesus Christ.

more prayers I was glad to return home, very fagged and rather disappointed, and lay down again.

I had just beheld a sight, after seeing which hundreds of men have plucked out their eyes, so that they might never be used to look upon anything less worthy. The practice of some fanatics has been to take a red-hot brick, and, holding it close to their faces, gaze on it till they roasted their eyes out. I felt tired and disappointed, that was all.

The noonday prayer on the next day made up the fifty prayers said in Medinah. On this day the Begum and the Amér expended large sums of money in largess. The whole of the household was "tipped." I received five rupees from the Begum and five rupees from the Amér. The caravan assembled at the gate of the city, but only the women mounted there. The donkey was allowed to come to the door of the house for me, and I rode it out through the walls and joined the caravan, which started about two hours before sun-

set, and was followed by a crowd of between two and three hundred beggars, for the first three miles of the road. The Amér, riding his horse, as he went along threw handfuls of small silver coins among the crowd. I gave the greater part of the money I had received that day to poor people who had come to Medinah in our company, but who were not returning with us. When we reached a turn of the road that would take us out of sight of Medinah, the caravan was halted for the pilgrims to mount. I alighted from my donkey, and, before mounting my camel, I had one last look at Medinah.

The city does not look to be more than one-third the size of Meccah, though its suburbs extend for a mile or two beyond the walls on every side but that next the hill. The walls are built of solid masonry, closely cemented in irregular layers, and are loopholed for musketry. They are a little over forty feet high, but have no ditch. Disposed at different short intervals all round them are a number of semicircular towers, about fifty feet high, projecting sufficiently beyond the plane of the wall to

give a flanking fire. At the north-west verge of the city is a Turkish fort, or castle, on a rock, commanding with its guns both the inside and outside of the walls, on which the Turkish flag is displayed — differing in that particular from the Turkish forts in Meccah. Of all the venerable sanctuaries of Mohammedanism Medinah ranks second (Jerusalem being the third); and one prayer said here equals one thousand said elsewhere, except in Meccah.

CHAPTER VIII.

BEGIN THE RETURN JOURNEY—A GREAT STORM.

I WAS not sorry to be saying good-bye to it, beautiful city as it is, and desperate journey as I was entering upon. When my turn came for the mounting-ladder—for I was obliged to use that now—I found little difficulty in getting into our shugduf, where I found the third warrior had fixed everything as handy as a pocket in a shirt. When comfortably stretched out, with my old partner opposite and a large water-melon between us, I began to think that after all, and with a little experience, desert travelling might be made quite enjoyable.

> To the pilgrim's homeward feet
> E'en the desert's path is sweet.

Moreover, I had become accustomed to the motion of the camel, so much so as even to think it agreeable. All night we see-sawed along without any accident or alarms, passing the time between snatches of sleep in talking, smoking, and eating water-melon. At daybreak we reached the end of our first stage. It was the best site for a camp we had come to yet. The hills around were low, and clothed with dark-green verdure, and the valleys between were fresh green meadows, dotted over with grazing camels and flocks of sheep. A troop of Turkish cavalry was camped on the plain, and the troopers were at the time exercising their horses, scouring at random over the sward in every direction at racing speed. A few carried long light reeds, and were practising throwing the Bedawin spear, at which they were very expert, especially in defending themselves.

The riding was good. We passed close by one fellow who was attacked by three others, and was defending himself all round with perfect success. He relied principally on dodging and evading the darts

by the rapid evolutions of his marvellously-trained horse. Twice I made sure he was hit, but he had reserved one reed for guarding himself, and just as the shaft reached him, he would interpose his own across it with a skill and rapidity amounting almost to sleight-of-hand, and with a sharp rasping click the dangerous dart would spring perpendicularly up, and fly twenty-five or thirty feet clear over his head, and fall wavering on the ground beyond him in a ridiculously harmless way. It was no child's play, for the darts were well meant, and if they hit they would have given a very severe bruise, light as they were.

We wound on past this exhilarating sight of sportive braves and pitched our tent within a hundred yards of a large well, under the shadow of a bluff hill covered with underwood. I felt the cheerful lightheartedness of a convalescent; my system seemed permeated with the delicious glow of returning health. As for eating a heavy breakfast and going to sleep in the tent with the rest, I'd twenty times rather have had to furl a flying-jib in a snow squall.

When they had all stowed away in the darkened tent, steaming and broiling under the hot canvas, I took one of the guns and a few cartridges and strolled out for a little walk, to pick up a few pigeons, or perhaps something better. The soldiers camped so near made the place safe from any large band of wandering marauders, and, with the gun in hand, I would not at all have objected to dropping upon a couple of murderously-inclined gentlemen. In my mind I had turned the tables on them. Since they only regarded me as legitimate sport, I would as soon bag a brace of Bedawi as a brace of partridges. I was not strong enough to go far away from the camp, but I sauntered about, or lay down on the cool grass under the shade of the rocks, waiting for any chance shot that might "happen along." I soon knocked over a few pigeons, and shot a hawk that *would have it.* He wheeled about over my head, attracted by the dead birds at my side, for more than an hour, and so, after covering him twenty times, I pulled the trigger. A bird of that kind can make itself quite annoying.

It was now the heat of the day, the camp was sleeping to a man. The well was deserted, so, close up under the cold shade of its low wall, I lay down with my birds and gun, to sleep or smoke away the rest of the afternoon, well out of range of the insect pests and noxious exhalations of our dirty camp. Not far from the well there was a solitary Bedawin hut, and I had just smoked enough to make me feel thirsty, when I saw come out of it two young girls with earthenware water-vessels under their arms. They were not veiled, and as they came towards me I could not help looking with more than common admiration at their lithe slender figures and graceful movements. When they came nearer I saw that they had handsome intelligent features, and were about sixteen and seventeen years of age, and evidently sisters. I must have been staring at them, for they both came up to me laughing, and said "Fortune, Shaykh." (Among the Bedawi even the gentler sex will not wish you *peace.*) "Upon you be peace," said I, for I was a devout pilgrim. As they were drawing their water it occurred to me to help

them; but that would not have been at all etiquette, so I sat and watched them at work. Their only dress was a dark-blue prettily embroidered "cutty-sark," rather fascinating and very unembarrassed. All at once I thought, what a perfect "Rebekah at the Well" either of those girls would make in a picture, and the fancy took me to rehearse the scene with them. When she had filled her pitcher I said: "Let me, I pray thee, drink a little water of thy pitcher." And she said: "Drink, Shaykh," and when she had done giving me drink, she said: "Bakshish!" Too true! They both said "Bakshish," laughing wickedly at the solemn stranger's respectful manner. "Oh, hang it!" I thought, "Rebekah at the Well! Why, you wouldn't be fit to put behind a public refreshment-bar." I dropped my polite dignity; I may even admit I became rude. I sprinkled both the young ladies with the few drops remaining in the cup, and said: "Yes, there is your bakshish." Down went their pitchers, and into it they went, like pigs into porridge, with both hands baling out the contents of a large camel-trough over me, screaming and laughing like

two young mad things. I emptied the contents of their own pitchers over them, and thoroughly drenched them; but I was nowhere, and got fearfully worsted. If it had not been for my wound I should have made a big splash, as it was I was obliged to ask them to stop "romping," because I was wounded. They would not believe me at first, but when they saw that I could not run away from them, but had to sit down, they stopped their fun and asked about the wound, and soon grew quite sympathetic and interested. When they had refilled their vessels, I gave them the birds I had shot, and they went away with a merry laughing "Fortune to you, Shaykh." After they had gone I lay down in the sun on a sandy place to dry, and spent the rest of the day wiping the gun and smoking, until the evening meal.

About sunset we were again under way, and found ourselves passing over the old barrenness of rock and sand. Our caravan numbered three hundred and twenty camels, and only about the same number of men walking—showing what a small percentage of the Hindis return from Medinah. Most of those

walking were men who had been a few years in Medinah. I did not see among them a single one who had walked to Medinah with us. We had the same Bedawi conductors and the same camels as we had brought with us from Meccah; and it was really wonderful to see the way the camels had improved in their ten days' rest at Medinah.

The night passed without anything happening worth recording; but when the sun rose it looked very red and threatening, and the sky to the north-west was obscured by a dense yellow bank of cloud. Already the breeze was fresh, and came down the hills and out of the gullies in strong gusts. The Bedawi were hastening forward the caravan in a way I had never seen them before. They were talking to one another in an excited manner, and looking every now and again in a half-frightened way at the cloud-bank in the north-west. However, I did not need such indications to tell me that we were in for "some sort" of weather. I expected a rain storm. I would not have been surprised at a sand storm; but that I was about to witness a

phenomenon that I could call by no other name than a gold storm, I expected about as much as I expect some day to be showered upon by the oft-talked-of cats and dogs.

During our journey we had often passed through districts very rich in mica; which, in certain lights, shines like burnished gold. In some places the sand was so largely composed of flakes of mica, and minute particles of this mineral, that a handful of it picked up and held in the sun close to the eye looked to be almost entirely gold-dust. Small pieces of the granite rocks about would sometimes look like nuggets of pure gold; and strewn all over the ground you could see millions of sparkling points, and here and there great shining stars of gold. I have often gone up to one of these last, which, until you become wary enough, are difficult to find; for when you shift your point of view, and change your light, they present themselves, as they really are, dull-gray paper-like translucent flakes of mica. It was one of these districts especially rich in mica that we were now passing through, and the fresh

breeze was already spangling the wool of the camels with tiny, almost imponderable, flakes of this gold-coloured mineral.

The wind increased steadily, and the Bedawi exerted themselves more and more to push forward the caravan. But when I found that at the soonest we could not reach the end of the march under four hours I felt we were in for it, whatever it was. It proved to be what an old sailor would call a "buster." The view soon became obscured by a yellow haze of sand, and the sun came down close over our heads in the form of a glaring dull-red ball, in that way so familiar to a Londoner during the fogs. The wind yelled over the high rugged rocks, swept them clean, and pounced down on us in the valleys, with its burden of dust and sand, rattling a shower against us that sounded on the outside of the shugduf like hail. The poor pedestrians must have suffered tortures from the sand blowing against their bare legs and faces, for it pricked like needles, as I found by holding my hand out of the shugduf. They sheltered themselves as much as

they could by getting on the lee-side of the camels and covering up their faces. The Bedawi did not seem to mind it so much. Their dress can be so arranged as to cover all but the lower parts of their legs, and their calves and shins seemed to be hardened to it. The air soon became so thickly laden with detritus that you could not see more than four or five camels ahead. The fine dust searched into the shugduf, and lodged in every wrinkle and fold in little ridges all over our clothes. The camels, the shugdufs, the men walking, the few green shrubs by the way, all became of the same light-yellow hue, spangled with gold. Though the wind was blowing with great violence the heat was intense. Perspiration was checked all over your body, still a constant desire for draughts of water was induced. Our skins became hot and feverish, and tingled painfully, and our lips dry and cracked. But by far the most interesting part of the storm to me was the shower of gold, which continued throughout the whole of the blow. At times the air was as thick with flying sparks of

mica as it is with flakes during a fall of fine snow: a more beautiful phenomenon it could scarcely be possible to imagine. I collected a quantity of the dust from my clothes and preserved it in a match-box, and even in the gaslight it shows sparkles of gold throughout the whole mass.

About an hour before we got in, the wind had increased to such force that the heavily-laden camels could scarcely stand up against it, and were often blown out of the track to the left, the wind being on our right and rather with us. It appeared to me that we must be blown off their backs every moment. During one of the stronger gusts a shugduf not far behind us was overbalanced by the wind and came to the ground. Shortly after that we passed one of the advance camels, which had broken down. It was lying on the sand, and already a drift was forming round it. Through the storm we at last reached the end of our march, having left five camels on the road, two of which came up afterwards, but one of the lost ones belonged to our party. It was also said two men were missing, and a woman whose shugduf had

overbalanced was brought in with a broken arm. It was, of course, impossible to pitch the tents in such a wind, so that there was nothing for it but to keep in the shelter of the shugdufs. After unloading the camels, and exposing ourselves to the pelting sand in doing so until we could bear it no longer, we covered ourselves up, to wait until the storm was past. After about a couple of hours, the wind still blowing as hard as ever, Shaykh the Bo'sen came and asked the Amér if he would care to come to the village and take shelter in one of the huts, when he could get something cooked. He said he would, and asked for volunteers to go with him. Both my companion and I offered to go.

When I had shaken the thick layer of dust off my blanket I threw it off me and got out of the shugduf. The caravan presented a very curious spectacle: under the lee of every camel and box, the forms of men were seen lying, covered with a thick layer of fine dust. As the drift had formed against the camels they had kept on raising themselves above it. All of us who were going to the village collected

under the shelter of some boxes, and then, guided by the Shaykh, we set out.

Though we had a fair wind with us the pelting sand pricked one's ankles dreadfully, and we were obliged to move cautiously for fear of losing the road, which, however, suited me, as I could not have run anyhow. At this time I noticed another feature of the storm. Clouds of locusts were being whisked away before the gale, and being dashed to the ground by hundreds. Many of them appeared to be dead when they fell, and most of them would rather be trod on than venture on the wing again. The village was about three hundred yards from the caravan, and the first sign of it we saw was a row of half-a-dozen huts that had been levelled with the ground, by the force of the wind and the weight of the sand that had accumulated against them. The next time we passed the spot, the only indication of their existence was to be seen in a low ridge of sand, three or four feet higher than the surrounding level. After we had passed the fallen huts we came to another row of huts, sheltered by a high rock from

the wind. Into the nearest of these we rushed, and found it filled with Bedawi belonging to the village and to our caravan. There were about twenty armed men in the greatest agitation, and the seniors among them were talking in harsh and excited voices. It was anything but a reassuring sight even to me, though I felt that the mishaps of the storm would account for their manner. The Amér, who was a little potentate at home, looked terrified; I believe he would have made a bolt for it, only the storm was about as bad to face as the Bedawi. Our conductor on first entering had entered into some hot discussion of the moment, which had taken his attention altogether from us. But after a few minutes he called one of his sons to him, a tall handsome young fellow, and gave him some directions about us. The young man then beckoned us to follow him, and we dodged out of that hut and into another a few yards off. Here we found two old women, who supplied us with pipes and coffee, and we squatted down on the matted floor and began to look nervously at one another. After

a few cups of strong black coffee and a few pulls at the pungent green Bedawi tobacco our tongues began to wag.

It was easy to see the Amér had a great scare on him, and two others, the first warrior and Dirvani, were equally frightened. They distrusted the Bedawi, saying that they had been brought away from the caravan for some purpose of foul play. The others who had come with us were the old conspirator and the second and third warriors. They proved to be men; they scouted the idea of danger from the Bedawi, and said that our arms were so superior that we could hold the hut against a hundred of them; they also had the sense to see that the real danger was with the caravan, believing that if the storm lasted long at its present fury many must die from exposure.

About two hours after we entered the hut, Shaykh the Bo'sen came to us and said that he had again visited the caravan, and found everything safe as yet; and he also told us he believed the storm was over; though to me it appeared

to have only reached the climax of its fury, and might take hours to die out. But he proved to be right. It had now grown so dark that we thought night had set in; but, as the Shaykh left us, it began to gradually brighten up, and shortly after the wind fell suddenly away; and we had an hour before sunset of as fine an evening as could be wished for.

When we returned to the caravan it was already unearthed, and was shaking itself free of sand. We never properly got clear of that sand till the south-west monsoon washed and blew it out of us in India. Our casualties were—two men killed (and buried at the same time); and the poor woman whose arm had been broken died that night; one camel had been suffocated, probably from being too far gone to take care of itself as the others had done.

We soon had the tents pitched and supper cooked. But sand and grit were in everything, causing the greatest discomfort. We shook and dusted our clothes and washed ourselves all over;

but shake and dust as we might, we only seemed to get dirtier. The fine dust had penetrated right through and through the very substance of the fabric of all the woollen and cotton material in the camp. A more dust-stained miserable lot of wayfarers never lay down together than we were when we turned in for the night. Next morning we rose, after a sleepless night, and commenced dusting and washing again. The well was so situated that it had been protected from the sand-drifts and had not been filled up; but in other parts of the valley the sand had been piled up against the rocks in sloping banks a hundred feet high, and every little projection above the level of the valley had become a mound of sand. In one place where there had been a clump of acacia-trees fifteen or twenty feet high, only a few of their upper branches projected from the top of a sand-hill.

We were to have stayed at this place only four hours, but the Bedawi now told us that we would have to wait the whole of that day to rest and recover the camels. The sky overhead was light-

blue, and cloudless, as usual, and the sun shone down on us white, bright, and powerful, as if he were trying to deny having been blurred into a hideous blood-red ball by the storm of yesterday.

CHAPTER IX.

INCIDENTS BY THE WAY.

We spent the day washing and dusting, clearing away wreck, and repairing damages; and by evening had put things about shipshape. Before taking down the tents they were emptied and beaten all over with sticks, until the clouds of dust that came out of the canvas darkened the interior. Still, when taken down and rolled up, they seemed to be almost twice their original weight. The loss of the camel which we had sustained on the previous day entailed some changes in our travelling arrangements; so that I found myself with the old conspirator for my camel-mate. He was a great talker, and entertained me all the night with his political and theological theories. The news of the

recent British occupation of Quitta had just reached us in the Hejaz, and my companion's view of "General Gladstone's" (?) action in the matter were, to say the least, unique. Once I narrowly escaped incurring the good gentleman's odium theologicum by injudiciously mentioning that I had heard that Isa-el-Islaam* had once performed the miracle of turning water into wine. The old gentleman was so indignant that he would scarcely hear me out. I rued the expression of the notorious heresy almost before I had said it. He, however, put it down to ignorance and disadvantages of early training, and at once set himself to right my ideas with a will. He argued hotly and at great length, showing a familiarity with the subject I did not expect to find in a man whom one would suppose could have little sound knowledge of Christianity. He maintained that Jesus Christ, being a true believer, could not have drunk wine Himself, and that to perform such a miracle as turning water into wine was utterly incompatible with His mission of peace,

* Jesus Christ.

when, as all know, there can be no greater incitive to quarrel than wine.

He declared that the account of that miracle—which had really been the converting of wine into water—was misrepresented by Christians, in order to reconcile their belief and their practice. He then went on to cite quite a startling array of what he considered the fallacies of our New Testament; affirming that the records of the sayings and doings of Jesus Christ had been curtailed and supplemented just as it suited the notions of the infidel compilers of our version. Many of his more subtle arguments were so specious that I will abstain from giving them, lest I might appear somewhat biased myself.

Mohammedans, though believing in the immaculate conception, deny the deity of Christ; believing Him to have been only an inspired mortal. They deny His crucifixion, believing that another victim suffered in His stead—a case of mistaken identity miraculously brought about.

After exhausting for a time the subject of re-

ligion, I led the old fellow up to a little bit of historical tradition, so generally believed among Mohammedans that it must have some foundation in fact. But I found him as vague on the subject as others I had heard speak of it. It is, that the English nation once nearly became Mohammedans. Once an English king wished to embrace the faith, and sent ambassadors to—some say Stamboul, some Cairo, and others Meccah—for that purpose; but that the project fell through on account of the death of the king. I have often wondered if any clue to the tradition could be found in our history—say in some of the intrigues about the time of King John, or during any one of the crusades.

In this way and in such conversations the old fellow and I passed many an hour on the camel, and became fast friends, for I was the best listener he had in the whole caravan. For the next four days we plodded on over the rocks and sand; once we travelled sixteen hours and halted for two, and then went on for twenty-five. All the time we underwent the same trifling disasters and the same alarms

as heretofore on the road. On account of the loss of a camel, my camel-mate was frequently changed, so that I had a variety of company.

One morning a youthful Bedawin, perched high up on a rock, let drive a couple of bullets at us. It seemed great fun to him, although it did not do us any harm.

I was getting quite able to walk with the camels, and would sometimes dismount and let one of my companions take my place for an hour or two. I used to carry a gun, and drop an occasional quail or partridge out of the long grass by the side of the road. At night we used to light up our way by setting fire to the dry shrubbery as we passed along, at times converting the dark rugged dells into creepy fiery infernos.

We reached Rabigh without anything particularly interesting occurring to me, though the journey was sufficiently eventful to many of my companions. We lost two of our party, servants of the Amér; one of them died during a halt, and I believe poisoned himself with an overdose of opium; the

other died on his camel from a remittent fever to which he was subject. In crossing the coast plain, after leaving the rocky region, we lost five of the people accompanying us on foot, and one camel dropped out of the caravan. After a day and a night in Rabigh, and a "square meal" of fresh fish, which I roasted myself at night, I felt quite recovered. My wound had ceased to suppurate, and had formed a firm scab, so that rags were no longer needed for it.

The fish of the Rabigh waters were curious uncouth monsters. Some of them were so ugly that it would require a man to be situated as I was before he could bring himself to eat them even curried. The great heads and tails of most of them were out of all proportion to the size of their bodies, and their artificial red, green, and blue colours looked unnatural. Some of the baskets of fish I saw in the bazaar were "miraculous draughts" in the way of hues and tints; a boiled-lobster-red being the most predominant colour. For myself I bought a small shark, as being the safest and most inviting fish in the market. We

were to go from this place by a slightly different route to the one we had come by, skirting along the sea for the first two days, and not being longer than twenty-four hours from water to water. Three days such as we had experienced at this stage of our outward journey would have been very trying to me in my then state of health. On leaving Rabigh the Amér and some of the more reverential of our party invested themselves in the two bath-towels which constitute the "ihram," or garb of the pilgrim to Meccah. Having once assumed it, it must not be changed until certain rites have been gone through in Meccah. It is a very scant and uncomfortable dress, and a bare head is an essential of it. Many of the pilgrims did not get into it until the day before we reached Meccah, and I, having the excuse of my wound, was one of the last to do so.

While in the ihram, you must divest yourself of all frivolity or worldliness, and figure only as a pious self-denying pilgrim. My friend the old conspirator went to great lengths in this way; I had given him credit for more sense. He suddenly took it into his

head, in a fit of piety, that it was sinful to smoke tobacco, and went about among us preaching his false doctrine so zealously that he brought the Amér and a dozen others over to his way of thinking. He held that the prohibition of intoxicating liquors in the Koran involved tobacco, and it was not particularly specified because it was unknown to the Prophet. He said it had been introduced by Christian emissaries of the devil from a "new world" for the purpose of trapping the faithful. He also proved that tobacco was very injurious to the health; giving many instances of disease and death brought on by its use, which had come under his observation. Some of his cases in point almost equalled Mark Twain's joke about the two drops on the end of a dog's tail followed by convulsions and death. This anti-tobacco and general abstemious craze went to such lengths with some of them that they actually gave up opium.

The coast along which we rode was a perfectly level wilderness; the surface of the ground over some large tracts was as hard and smooth as asphalt. We passed several small salt lakes or back-waters,

and at one of them I dismounted and took a bathe. It was a great mistake, for the water was so salt that as it dried on me it left visible crystals, and made my skin disagreeable and sticky, until I washed in fresh water on the next day. The mirage was constant; nothing you saw, if a short distance off, appeared as, or where, it really was. A Bedawin riding past us at full speed, carrying a long spear, was in sight for more than an hour and a half. He took all kinds of fantastic shapes, and, as regards the distance, he was off at any moment; the best range-finder ever invented could not have localised him. At one time he was split up into three, with a space of something that looked like a surface of shimmering water between each part—the legs of the camel dancing along over the plain without any body attached to them, and high over them the body of the camel and rider flying through the air, and above them again the tuft of feathers surmounting his spear, looking like a bird in the air. We were constantly being deluded by visions of trees not far off, but we never came to them.

During the heat of the day sand-pillars flitted about the plain by dozens, some of them appearing to be agitated by a very powerful wind. I never came near enough to one to go into it, though I longed to investigate one of them closely. I am satisfied that those of ordinary dimensions are perfectly harmless; but the Bedawi have a superstitious dread of them, calling them devils, and blessing themselves whenever one approaches them. What added greatly to the dreariness of this horrid waste was the total absence of animal life; not a fish-jump ruffled the surface of the glassy lakes; not even the proverbial and familiar pelican of the wilderness was to be seen by the side of them; no wheeling vultures overhead; even the swarms of flies properly belonging to the caravan deserted. I almost fancied that our "inside passengers" were reduced to a policy of "masterly inactivity" for a time. (I had come to this, that when you asked a man to do anything, he usually told you to wait till he'd done scratching himself.) The carcasses of camels which we passed had the flesh dried on to

the bones as hard as wood. I shall never forget one corpse, that of a man—nationality quite indistinguishable. The body had first distended to about three times its original bulk and then dried in that form. I turned it over as it lay on the sand, and it was so light I could have lifted it with one hand. It made a creaking and drumming noise as I moved it, very like the sound of shaking a rolled-up hide of sole-leather.

During the day the heat was such that I am certain the thermometer would seldom have fallen below a hundred degrees Fahrenheit; but the nights were relatively very cold, and worn out by the trying days we all slept soundly through the nights. I arrived at two conclusions with reference to that region. First, that the refraction of light by the air was so remarkable that artillery would be rendered practically ineffective. Secondly, that I would never go a Sabbath-day's journey into it again until I could do it on a bicycle, and have relays of caravans sent on loaded with iced lemon-squashes.

Before we left the plain we lost two more camels

and four of the pedestrians. One of the camels unfortunately belonged to our party, and one of the donkeys gave out. The poor jaded brute could keep up with the caravan by itself, but could not be ridden. This brought the turns at riding and walking round more quickly among us. I was walking on the morning that we reached the first isolated hill on the border of the plain; the road wound close past the south side of it. It was not more than three hundred yards round its base, so I ventured to take the gun, push on ahead, and pass it on the opposite side to the caravan-road. As there was usually a good deal of vegetation on the north side of these rocks, they were pretty sure finds of small game. I had just lost sight of the caravan, and stepped quickly out from behind a large boulder, which I had kept before me in coming up to the spot where I expected to rise the birds, when I saw before me on the ground the body of a man quite recently killed. It was that of a Maghribi, who had probably been separated from his caravan, preceding ours four days.

This hardy native of the North African desert must have supported life, after losing his way, until the night before, when he had been encountered by Bedawi and slain. The corpse was chiefly interesting to me as illustrating the frightful nature of the wound which the terrible jambiyah (Bedawi knife) will inflict. There was a gunshot in the head, and the body was much mutilated with sword-cuts; but the jambiyah wound would have been judged by any one not acquainted with the weapon to have been made with a broad axe. The thorax and abdomen were laid open from just below where the left collar-bone joins the breastbone down to the left groin, and all the viscera interposed were severed as with a razor. While inspecting this interesting object I kept my eye on the rocks, and changed my shot-charges for ball. I have no doubt the perpetrators of the deed were on the hill, but I rejoined the caravan safely.

CHAPTER X.

THE DEATH OF THE AMÉR'S UNCLE.

OFTEN, when narrating what now follows, it has been doubted that a man could go to sleep while riding on a donkey. Accustomed as I was to sleeping on the camel, I have often had the greatest difficulty in keeping my eyes open at night, both on horse and donkeyback. On the night of which I am now writing I found myself, shortly after sunset, riding on our good donkey; the donkey I have before spoken of as a great puller. His pace was so much greater than that of the camels, that he required a constant heavy drag on his mouth. I was extremely sleepy, and the night was just pleasantly cool. I muffled myself up warmly, and, after trying all sorts of dodges

on my donkey, I finally thought I had eased him down to about the right speed by drawing his head into his chest and fastening the reins to the saddle. Two or three times I dozed off, and woke with a start to find him going along at about the right pace. At last I became more confident, and laying my head down on the high pommel of my Arab saddle, I dropped off sound asleep.

I slept for a long time, and then, "oh what an awakening!" I was in the midst of a vast yellow plain, with the dark cloudlike hills visible round the horizon, but not a sign or vestige of my companions anywhere. I was a "castaway" in the desert. For all the evidence to the contrary, I might have been the only inhabitant in the world. I must say I felt rather queer for the first minute or so, but I soon pulled myself together. There was a little moon, and the white donkey I rode stood out very conspicuously in its light. I did not want to be picked up sooner than I could help by any bands of prowling Bedawi, so I took a stone and laid it on the end of the donkey's bridle,

and went off a hundred yards or so and sat down to review the position, over a pipe. I knew that, if I was in the road at all, all the chances were that I was in advance of the caravan. Besides, I could not have got so far to the rear as to lose sight of my companions without having been snapped up by the Bedawi, who are always on the look-out for stragglers in that direction, and who would look upon it as flying in the face of Providence to let such a godsend as a solitary well-dressed man and a good donkey slip through their hands. I sat smoking for about half-an-hour, during which I worked out the caravan's course and distance since I had been with it—partly by dead-reckoning and partly by stellar observation. I remembered that it was to have halted at midnight, and then determined that it was about that time now. I also fancied I recognised a hill on the horizon as one we had passed about sunset. I decided that I would ride for that hill at the best speed I could, ascend it, and look out for the fires of the camp. If I could not see them I would then wait till

daylight, and allow the donkey to graze and rest near the hill; then, finding the camel-track, hasten forward after the caravan, trusting to nerve and my sword-bayonet if I should fall in with Bedawi.

I had little fear but that I should overtake the caravan, and considered it by no means the worst scrape I had ever been in. My course once decided on, I remounted and set off, as I judged, exactly retracing my steps. I proved to be right, for I had not been ten minutes in the saddle when I saw the caravan, about a quarter of a mile off, coming up a gentle slope in the plain.

When I rejoined them I looked as unconcerned as I could; but the Bedawi had missed me, and laughed in a very warning manner as I appeared among them. Some of them made remarks to the effect that I had been very lucky, but had better be more careful. There was no need to tell me that; I took care never to mount that donkey at night again. Next day I offered to ride the donkey all day through the hottest of the sun rather than at night. Everyone was willing, most of them preferring the shade of the

shugduf during the day. The donkey seemed to know it was getting to the end of its journey, and pulled harder than ever, and I was very glad when, about an hour after sunset, I was relieved by the Amér's uncle. He was a decrepit old man. I don't think his actual years were over forty, but he was utterly broken down and prematurely aged, by long-continued indulgence in opium. When I changed places with him I warned him, whatever he did, not to go to sleep, and told him the trick the donkey had played me on the night before. His manner showed me at once that he had been taking an extra allowance of his darling drug. I felt very much afraid on his account. Before mounting the camel I walked some distance by his side, trying to impress on him the necessity of keeping wide awake, but he only kept on answering: "Good, good!" and I could see he was half asleep before I left him. I took the precaution of taking the lame donkey from the man who was leading it, and tying it on behind the other, to act as a sort of drag, hoping to retard the pace of the first donkey a little. My anxiety about him did not

prevent my falling into a sound sleep in the place just vacated by the doomed man—for I had a presentiment that he was doomed—as soon as I lay down in the shugduf. I had slept for about two hours when the stopping of the camel awoke me, and I became aware that some excitement was going forward at the advanced part of the caravan. The news soon reached us: the Amér's uncle had been found by the side of the road badly wounded and insensible, with a large stone rolled on him. They took him up and put him on a camel, and at the next halt he was brought into the tent and his wounds dressed.

I saw him before he was bound up; he had a number of bad bruises and abrasions over his head and back, and one very severe cut from the right elbow down the back of the arm to the wrist. Consciousness returned to him, and he was able to give an account of what had happened. Of course, he went to sleep on the donkey as soon as I left him, and the next thing he knew he was woke up with a thump on the back from a stone. The

caravan was nowhere to be seen, but all round him in the partial darkness he saw human figures flitting about among the rocks, and, as he described it, "raining stones on him." This is one of the Bedawin modes of attack when without firearms, or when they do not wish to use them. Their idea is to draw your fire on to their quickly-moving bodies, which you are expected to miss, and then, if some lucky stone has not done it, to close in and finish you. In this case these elaborate tactics were quite uncalled for. The poor old fellow, though he had two loaded pistols in his belt, never thought of using them. He sat quietly on the donkey praying under the shower of missiles; he had not even a worm-turning-point, for he sat and prayed to the last. As I heard him tell it I almost wished I'd been in his place. The Bedawi, finding that their stone-throwing was not producing the desired results, and concluding most likely that their victim was unarmed, began to draw closer, and one of the daring robbers, with intrepidity that must have gained him a lasting fame among his tribe, came

up, behind the old fellow and hit him a whack on the back with a long stick, and then ran away. Others, seeing that no resistance was offered, came up and repeated the whacks—they appear to me to have been trying if he was alive—and then a fellow came near enough to give him the cut on the arm, and another hit him on the head and knocked him senseless. Probably the caravan came up at this crisis, before they had time to strip and despatch him; so they rolled a big stone on him to keep him quiet until the caravan passed, and then hurried off out of sight with the donkeys. It would have been perhaps as well if the old fellow had been left to their mercy, for he lingered on for two days in the greatest suffering, and on the day before we reached Meccah he died.

At the first halt after losing the donkeys, Shaykh the Bo'sen offered to recover them for two pounds. (The ruffian! though he did save my life.) This the Amér agreed to give him. About twenty of our Bedawi then went off fully armed, with their matchlocks loaded and burning fuses. They returned

in a couple of hours with the donkeys. I have no doubt but that some of our conductors were the very men who had stolen them. They gave us the most graphic descriptions of the hard-fought battle in which they had recovered them, and showed a good deal of blood; but the only wounds were to be found on the hind-quarters of our good donkey. That animal was so badly gashed that it was rendered useless for the rest of the journey. As we came nearer to Meccah it was curious to note how the brusque authoritative manner of our Bedawi conductors changed. Having in view the early settling-day and possible bakshish, they became almost civil to us. In proportion as the Bedawi became subdued, the spirits of the pilgrims rose and their confidence increased; it was significant of this that, on the last day before we reached Meccah, a Bedawi was wounded by a pilgrim in a scrimmage with swords, and no retaliation was attempted by the others. The Amér was in great tribulation over the death of his uncle, which happened at our last halt; but he smothered his sorrow

in opium, and concluded that it was a very blessed and desirable end to be killed on the pilgrimage.

The old fellow had been conscious just before he died, and had made a last request that, as we were only a few hours distant from Meccah, he should be taken to the Holy City to be buried. When the breath left him we rolled him up in calico, intending to put him on a camel, but at the last moment the Bedawi demurred to carrying the body at all, and then only consented on condition that they were given a most extravagant payment for the use of an animal for that purpose alone. To this the Amér would not agree; so we hastily buried the old fellow where we were. I thought, as we placed a few bushes and stones over the shallow grave, how very easily that might have been my fate once. I came in for the reversion of the old fellow's ihram, which was a very good thick one. We had not enough of the rough bath-towels, which form the most comfortable and fashionable pilgrim's garb, to go round the whole party, so that I had had to use a couple of strips of thin

white calico; but now I came in for the uncle's swell and comfortable dress.

On the afternoon of the thirteenth day after leaving Medinah, and thirty-six days after we had set out from it, we returned to Wady Fatima. We made no halt there, but all who were able dismounted and walked the rest of the way into Meccah, by the side of the caravan. Just as we dismounted it was the time of afternoon prayer, and I went to fill a small pot of water from the skins on the water-camel for my ablution. In doing this I received a kick from the camel. It was in this way: In drawing off the water you walk along by the side of the animal, untie the neck of the skin you are taking the water from, holding the pot under until full; then closing the mouth of the skin with one hand, you put the pot on your head or under your arm, and have both hands to retie the mouth of the skin. The camels were going rather unsteadily, and I was a long time fumbling about doing this, when all at once the brute stopped dead, lifted up its nearest hind-leg, as if it was going to scratch the top of its

back, and then lashed out, hitting me on the lower part of my chest. I was lifted off the ground and came down on my face on the hard stony ground. The agony was awful; I felt as if my whole inside was torn up; I turned on my back, closed my eyes, and asked the people about not to touch me. I lay for two or three minutes, suffering tortures, before I could rise; when I did get up, my companions near me remarked how sick I looked. I saw that there was blood on my ihram, my hands and knees were very much torn by my fall, and there was a bit of a "gravel rash" on my right cheek. After being kicked by a camel, it strikes one as quite puzzling how such an apparently soft-cushioned pad as a camel's foot can strike so hard, and yet I do not think that even an iron-shod hoof can do more execution. The camel's kick is a study. As it stands demurely chewing the cud, and gazing abstractedly at some totally different far-away object, up goes a hind-leg, drawn close in to the body, with the foot pointing out; a short pause, and out it flies with an action like the piston and connecting-rod of a steam-engine, showing a judgment of

distance and direction that would lead you to suppose the leg gifted with perceptions of its own, independent of the animal's proper senses. I have seen a heavy man fired several yards into a dense crowd by the kick of a camel, and picked up insensible.

My accident happened very unfortunately; for the blood defiled and broke my ihram, rendering a reinvestment and purification necessary. This entailed half-an-hour's ablution and prayer. We had now no water left, the skin at which I had been having run itself dry before anyone could take my place and tie it up. The only thing to be done was to push forward ahead of the caravan, to a small tank said to exist by the roadside, and take my old calico ihram with me and put it on again. Some of my companions, who had been a little jealous about my coming in for the dead uncle's ihram, said very ill-natured things about dead men's clothes bringing no luck; but of course I could only laugh good-temperedly, at the same time feeling the force of their remarks none the less. I managed reinvestment and ablution all right.

CHAPTER XI.

PASS THROUGH MECCAH TO JEDDAH.

TOWARDS evening we began to get among the outlying habitations of Meccah. Great crowds assembled to see the Hindi caravan from Medinah come in. Old women came up to us and asked if we were from the tomb of the Prophet of God, and on being told that we were, devoutly kissed the hem of our ihrams. After Medinah, how dirty and unwholesome the narrow steep streets of Meccah appeared! and yet I can assure the reader that the feeling with which I entered Meccah was one of relief, and a sense of security amounting almost to the homeward-bound feeling with which one arrives in port after a long voyage in an unseaworthy ship.

As we passed through the streets the caravan

broke up, and the different parties separated from it and went to the parts of the town where they intended to stay. We went into the very centre of the city, to the house in which we had formerly lived. Almost at the door there lay a dead camel-foal, partially devoured by the dogs, and the air was redolent of it, bringing the fact that we were at last back in Meccah most forcibly home to us. When the door of our large room was unlocked and opened, for the first time since we had left the house, what an atmosphere there was in it! The dust lay on the boxes and bundles that had been left behind so thick that it could be scraped up in handfuls, just as one gathers up a thin layer of snow. The camels lay down in the street outside, and while they were being unloaded a party was detailed to clean the room, then the Amér and his principal companions went to their devotions. Myself and my old camel-mate received orders to watch all the property, as it was taken off the camels and laid in a great pile outside the door, until the room was made habitable, when it could be removed inside. It was very late that night

when we finished our devotions and packed ourselves into the close stifling room, head and tail, like sardines in a box—quite as oily, and, it occurred to me at the time, almost as brainless.

The Amér had been so pleased with the horse he had taken with him to Medinah that he determined to buy two more in Meccah to take to India, and the next day he spent in choosing them. About a dozen were brought to the house when it became known that he was buying. They were chiefly owned by officers of the Turkish garrison, and were all good animals. He bought two young bay entires for one hundred dollars each, getting the saddles and bridles thrown in after a great deal of bargaining.

The town was not nearly so crowded as it had been when we left it, still a great number of pilgrims remained in it, and hundreds came on each day of our stay, begging for a return passage with the Amér. Four days were spent in Meccah, during which the Amér laid out a great deal of money in precious stones and bars of gold, procured in the country. The Bedawi who had conducted us hitherto were

retained to take us to Jeddah, and on the afternoon of the fourth day after our arrival, the camels were brought to the door, and in a few hours everything was in readiness for our final leave-taking.

It had been settled that I should take charge of one of the horses and ride to Jeddah on it. The horse that I was to ride was a very young thing, and was expected to be rather restive and require some management; but after I had been on him a few minutes I found that a kinder horse you could not have. He would not walk any closer to the camels than he could help, but once give him his place and he would keep it until you changed it, no matter what it might be, and he was guided by the lightest pressure of the reins against his neck. My feelings, as we left Meccah behind us, were such as cannot easily be defined; they were something like the happiness one feels on falling in an unexpected stroke of fortune; and yet I could scarcely realise that in less than two days I should be in the company of Christians and Englishmen. It seemed as if I had not seen a

countryman for years and years, whereas it had only been a few months. But what a complete separation from the world and my kind it had been! I began to wonder what I should say to the first Englishman I met, and how it would sound to hear English talked as the common language again. I spent most of the night as we rode along talking to myself in English, and practising saying "Good-morning;" for my own language on my own tongue had really come to have an unfamiliar sound to me. About an hour after daylight we came to a halt at Haddah, and half the distance between Meccah and Jeddah was accomplished.

All day we stayed there, and I felt impatient during a halt for the first time since I had been travelling with camels. I should have liked to have jumped on a horse and spurred off at full speed; but it would not have done. I could not sleep or eat, and the sun appeared as if it would never go down. I passed part of the day basking in a stream of running water that flowed near the camp, and was driven out of that by a little

Bedawin child. I think the episode is worth recording, as showing how early the principles of murder and robbery are instilled into the native youth, if indeed it is not an hereditary instinct. When I went into the water I had taken off my clothes and hidden them under some stones, in case some pilfering Bedawi might creep up and steal them when I was not looking. I must have lain some two hours, with the delicious cool stream rippling over me, when I saw a small almost naked child behind some stones coming stealthily in my direction. I saw the little vermin meant some mischief, and got a big stone ready for him, at the same time letting him know that I could see him. I expected he would run away, but not a bit of it; he came boldly up to me and shouted the Bedawi "Stand and deliver!" (Haat fleus!*), holding out his little hand, flourishing a large knife, and looking as fierce as may be. The boy was not more than fourteen years old, and I confess I admired the boldness of his little enterprise.

* Give money!

But here was a predicament for me! You can never tell how far the madness of a youthful adventurer like this may carry him; he looked to me as if he had the most perfect confidence in his ability to go through with it. I did not want to hurt the boy, or I might have squashed him there and then with a big stone. Catching hold of him would have been altogether too risky. I was naked, and he had a sharp knife with which he might have given me a nasty cut, lay hold of him as I might. It requires a good deal of nerve to handle a rat even, when you are certain of a bite. I tried to represent to him how preposterous his demand was, when he could see I was perfectly naked. But he only repeated his "Haat fleus!" in a more threatening way, and flourished his knife nervously close to my abdomen. He knew my clothes were somewhere about, and my manner only encouraged him, and made him think that he had got hold of a poor unresisting pilgrim that he could "get away with." For a moment I thought of running and leaving my clothes, until I could come back with a big stick

and get them. I really thought once that the boy would try and give me a taste of his knife. In the meantime I conceived the following plan: I led him to my clothes, pulled them out from under the stones, and made them up into a neat hard bundle, as though I intended to give them to him; but instead of that, I let him feel what my prowess would be in a bolster fight, and knocked him sprawling with a swinging thump from my bundle, and then bolted off and was out of range before he could even gather himself up and return it with a stone. But I heard him scream his infantile defiance after me until I came within sight of the camp. I then stopped and put on my clothes. I told the story to my companions, and it gave rise to a good deal of mirth; but they all agreed that you could expect nothing else from "the sons of devils who called themselves true believers, but never prayed."

At sunset we set out for our last march in the desert, and after an uneventful night we sighted the sea, the white walls of Jeddah, and half-a-dozen English steamers riding at anchor in the port.

Shortly after we entered the gates of the town I saw a Frenchman I had known before, but he did not recognise me in my native costume, though he looked very hard at me, as if there was something about me he could not quite make out. I should very much like to have spoken to him, if it was only to hear his voice; but I did not wish to undeceive my companions as yet, out of consideration for their feelings, so I went on with them to a lodging-house close down near the water's edge. Here we were to put up until a passage could be engaged for us in a suitable ship.

I promise you I did not stay to breakfast on currie and rice that morning. As soon as I could wash and change my tunic and turban, I hurried out and spent one rupee of the two and a half that I possessed on a mutton cutlet, with white bread and coffee, in a French restaurant not far off. Over a smoke and glass of cognac in this place I had a conversation with two or three Frenchmen. I told them where I had come from, and my circumstances, and they offered to provide me with

European clothes, which I was glad to accept; though I did not put them on at once.

The next thing I did was to go to the British Consulate, to remind them of my former visit. I do not think they ever expected to see me there again. They most likely thought they had seen the last of me when I left them to go to Meccah. The Consul was away in a gun-vessel at the time, but the gentleman acting for him kindly offered to do his best to get me a passage to Bombay; when I told him I would rather work as a sailor than be compelled to remain as I was. He also gave me all the latest news to read; which was very welcome.

I remained away from my old companions all the day. After talking to a countryman I almost dreaded going back to my fellow-pilgrims; and positively hated the title of Haji, by which we now ostentatiously addressed one another, and which I had been through so much to obtain. Their habits and ways, that had been my own for months, suddenly took the most degraded and disgusting

form in my eyes. I was without funds, so that I could not well leave them at the moment. I walked about the streets until the night began to get cold, when I was constrained to return to the house and litter down in the old style in the crowded rooms. How beastly it did seem, under the reaction that had come over my feelings!

At daybreak I rose and left the house again. I walked about near the beach, looking at the ships, and regarding them in the light of so many homes; as indeed they would have been to me could I have got on board them. I meant, when the shops opened, to make a good breakfast out of my remaining rupee and a few coppers.

In walking through a rather crowded bazaar towards the restaurant, I came upon a little crowd assembled round a Hindi woman and a young boy, who was doing some very feeble street tumbling. Probably she was the widow of some pilgrim, trying to make a little money to carry her home to her friends. I thought I would give them a copper, and put my hand into my pouch, where I had seven

coppers and one rupee. Although all the coins were about the same size, I did not think it likely that I should come upon the rupee. I just pitched out the first that came into my fingers, without looking at it. Of course it was the rupee. Neither the admiration of the crowd nor the looks of gratitude from the woman and boy repaid me for the disappointment.

You may judge what sort of a humour I was in when I returned home without my breakfast. I told the Amér there and then that I was going to leave him, and enlist in the Sultan's army. At first he laughed at me, and pretended he thought I was joking; then he tried reproaches and abuse, and finally entreaties; reminding me that he was going to give me five hundred rupees a month, and a troop in one of the cavalry regiments he supported for Government of his own native state. I then told him if he would give me the money to pay for my own passage I would remain with him. I explained that I wanted the money because, being a sailor, I could get a passage for myself cheaper than a lands-

man. The real reason was that I knew that, though the passage-money was now thirty rupees, it would be down to ten before the ship would get her full complement of passengers; so that I would clear twenty rupees by the transaction. Such are the shifts to which private research is occasionally put. The Amér would not have let me leave him at that time for a good deal, so he gave me the thirty rupees I asked him for.

That day he engaged a passage for the whole of his suite, in a large two-thousand-ton English steamer, that was advertised to sail on the next day. I spent the whole of the day away from my companions, chiefly down at the boat-landing, talking to the crews of the ships' boats. I met a man who only three years before had been A.B. in a large London sailing-ship in which I was second mate. Though we had been a year and four months in the same ship, and he had been in my watch the whole time, he did not recognise me. I talked to him for two hours in broken English, without his having a glimmering of whom he was talking to; showing how

my unshaven chin and eastern costume had metamorphosed me. When I did declare myself, and change my voice, the man was still inclined to be incredulous, but, to his astonishment, I proved my identity. On the same day I looked up some of the English captains of the steamers, and asked them to let me work my passage with them; but they told me they had heard of me at the Consulate, and had decided not to give me a passage, for fear of offending the pilgrims they intended to carry. I called at the Consulate, and was told that no captain would give me a passage unless I travelled as a Mohammedan.

It was no use "kicking against the 'bricks'"—as I once heard it put—so I must content myself to remain as I was, and travel with the Amér to Bombay.

The sailing of the ship in which he had taken passage was put off from day to day, for five days; and, as I had foreseen, the price of the passage gradually went down, until, on the morning of the day on which she actually did sail, it

went down to ten rupees. Then I got hold of an old Hindi beggar, and sent him into the office to take out a ticket in my name, and gave him a rupee for his pains.

CHAPTER XII.

ON BOARD SHIP.

THE whole of our party went off to the steamer in three large lighters, and we had little difficulty in embarking ourselves and our property. The three horses followed in a fourth lighter. When it came alongside, though there was a little jump of a sea on, the horses were quiet and did not appear in the least frightened. I was standing on deck, in the gangway, to watch them come in, and I remember thinking that it was very foolish to blind them with such enormous cloths as they had folded round and round and over and over, and tied securely on their heads. But most idiotic of all, their legs were tied together, and then about a fathom of line leading from their leg-lashings to the

gunwale of the lighter was there made fast. There were two horses in the midship compartment of the boat, and the one on the side nearest the steamer was soon slung, steam turned on, and up he rose; but as he was lifted off his feet he lunged out and gave his companion a nasty kick. The other poor horse rose in a startled rear as the boat rolled. No one was at his head; there was nothing whatever to keep him inboard; over the gunwale he went, and hung at the side of the lighter, with his hoofs just level with the surface of the water. Here was a position!—one horse drowning instantly; another hanging outside the ship, thirty feet above the lighter, and lashing out its legs so wildly that it looked momentarily as if it would struggle out of the slings and fall; while the third, in the forward compartment of the lighter, was doing its best to follow its companion overboard.

The Arabs and negroes in the lighter capered about aimlessly, swearing and shouting; but attempting nothing to save the two horses. The ship's deck was so crowded with excited and ex-

claiming pilgrims that the ship's people who were taking in the horses were lost to one another, and their work had come to a standstill.

It was easy to see what ought to have been done. The horse hanging at the derrick should have been landed at once, and then an effort made to hook the other on and heave it out of the water, before it was too far gone. The confusion of unintelligible and contradictory orders, the crowding of loudly-crying and praying pilgrims, made individual action of any kind useless.

It appeared probable that all three of the beautiful animals would be lost. The miserable impotency one feels at such a crisis! Without the authority or power to direct others, and uncertain and hesitating about the best course to pursue oneself, twenty ideas flash across my mind in the twentieth of a minute, but none of them will meet the emergency. I turned away from the scene, and tried to calmly take in the whole case. There stood the Amér and the principal members of his suite on the bridge, wailing and wringing their hands in

unison, and executing contortions sympathetic to every flounder of the drowning horse. For him the only hope now lay in cutting his legs clear, and giving him a chance to save himself. There was no immediate way down to the boat, and I had no knife about me; I could only ease my feelings by yelling at the people near it to cut the horse's legs clear. It was some relief to see that the third horse had become steady, and was standing safely in the boat. Just then a tremendous plunge of the animal in the water broke the ropes holding its fore legs; but that did not mend matters, for it now hung in a way that would have made it more difficult to get at him with a sling.

The ship's people now came to their senses, and swung the suspended animal in-board, and landed him, frightened and trembling, on the deck, where the crowd soon gave a wide berth to his lively heels. I now took a knife from a sailor, and jumped on the chain-runner as soon as it was unhooked from the horse, and in an instant was lowered into the lighter. To knock down a couple

of niggers who were in the way, and cut the drowning horse adrift, was the work of three seconds; but it was too late. I question if it would have done much good at any time. Twice his head came to the surface, but it was so enveloped in wet cloths that it might as well have been at the bottom. The ropes round his legs got more entangled, and would have hampered him so that, even if he had had the sense and strength left to make a swim for it, he could not have struck out properly. Three times I was on the point of jumping in the water to endeavour to free the animal; three times I put my hands together for a dive; but the horse, as it sank down in the clear transparent blue, gave such terrific struggles as to put me off each time. I stood and watched it. His powerful young life was hard to quench; from first to last it must have been between three and four minutes in the agonies of its extreme distress before it ceased to strive and its energies collapsed. Then the dead body rose to the surface, and was towed alongside by the ship's boat to be hove on deck.

Poor fellow! It was he who had brought me away from detested Meccah. A short acquaintance with some animals serves to foster a very strong attachment. As he lay on the deck his wet skin looked more beautiful and glossy than ever, and his head as lovely; but the eye was glazed. I am not ashamed to say I felt strongly affected, and could not return to the part of the deck where he lay until I knew he had been delivered over to the sharks.

Now that I was cooler I was glad I had not jumped in after the horse, for I well knew that a drowning horse instinctively gets on the top of every solid object it encounters in the water. I have heard two or three instances of men being drowned in that way while swimming horses.

The third horse was taken in without any mishap. I saw it out of the lighter myself, taking care that there should be no more of the melancholy mismanagement that had already been so disastrous.

In the scenes above described I had thrown off

all semblance of a Mohammedan, and talked in the most undisguised English, making copious use of very emphatic nautical expressions; so much so that the ship's people knew I was an Englishman, notwithstanding my costume and close-clipped hair. The officer who had been superintending the taking in of the horses came to me, thinking I was the owner. I soon put him right, told him who I was, and explained to him all the circumstances. We then went together to the Amér, as he wanted to know if the owner of the horse considered the ship in any way to blame for its loss. The Amér had regained his composure, and resigned himself to circumstances like a true fatalist, as he was. When I interpreted the officer's question to him, he merely replied: "God gave, and God has taken away." He then praised me for my efforts to save his horse, and noticing that I had lost my tarbouche, it having fallen overboard as I went down into the lighter, he ordered me to be given a very handsome one of his own. I then went forward and made myself known to the sailors, and they

at once gave me the run of their forecastle and the run of my teeth. I then deposited my bundle in an empty bunk, and took up my quarters there for the rest of the passage.

The Amér and about fifty other wealthy pilgrims were first-class passengers, who lived in the cabin and were allowed on the poop. I had taken a third-class ticket, which only allowed me the use of the main and lower decks, so that the Amér, of necessity, could see but little of me during the time we were on board. I hoped—though I did not care much—that he would not find out where I lived. Besides the first-class passengers, the ship was carrying one thousand three hundred third class. When I state that these were all huddled together, men, women, and children, indiscriminately, and were so put to it for space that there literally was not room for all to lie down at the same time, it will be understood why, to many of the pilgrims, the sea voyage has greater terrors than the land journey. During our passage of twenty-one days to Bombay, not a day passed without its

death; and on one fine morning three corpses were dragged up from the foul lower-deck, out of the midst of a reeking throng of penned-up human beings.

During the whole passage I was never once asked for by the Amér. A couple of days before the ship reached Bombay I dressed myself in the clothes of an English sailor, and walked about among the pilgrims. The change in my appearance was so great that I believe I might have spoken to any of my old companions without their knowing me.

On the morning of the day on which we arrived in Bombay I shaved and put on my European rig, and afterwards stood on the deck and heard my pilgrim friends asking one another about me, and wondering what part of the ship I was in. There were many more places in the ship than they knew of, and I kept myself out of the way of all my Mohammedan acquaintances, until I saw an opportunity of bundling my kit into a boat and slipping on shore alone. I then entered my name on the

books of the Sailors' Home, and nobody would have suspected that the young English sailor who ate as much cold pork for his supper that night as any other three men at the table, had been the zealous Mohammedan devotee of a few weeks before.

A few days afterwards I met the Amér in the street. Either he did not know me, or he thought me an undesirable acquaintance and cut me. If the latter, I can only hope that the reader who has accompanied me through this pilgrimage will not have formed the same opinion, and intend to do likewise should we ever be thrown together.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE HEJAZ.

I CANNOT pretend to add anything to our geographical or natural knowledge of the country known as the Hejaz. Indeed, it would only be presumption in me to attempt to supplement, with my necessarily crude conclusions and opinions, work which has already been so thoroughly done by my exact predecessor, Captain R. F. Burton. But as many intelligent and otherwise well-informed Englishmen have not been ashamed to confess to me that they had no precise idea of the whereabouts on the earth's surface of Meccah, and as only the other day I observed that a writer in "The Thunderer" itself spoke of "Hejaz" as though it were a

town or city, I may venture to offer some short description of the country and people.

The country is bounded on the north by the Land of Midian, subject to the Pasha of Egypt, and extends down the coast of the Red Sea to about the twentieth parallel of latitude. To the eastward it comprised territory reaching from the coast to the great central plateau of the Nedj, the home of the Arab horse, and subject to Wahabi rule.

The Hejaz is subject to the Sultan of Turkey, and every considerable town is garrisoned by his troops, and the roads are kept open by patrols of Turkish cavalry. Although the Turks maintain their authority with a strong hand, in a harsh semi-barbarous manner, they but inefficiently protect travellers through the country, and would be powerless, until largely reinforced, to resist any general rising of the natives, especially if armed with modern and serviceable weapons. I do not think that such a revolt is at all improbable, but rather I should say imminent; for the detestation of Turkish rule is shared alike by both town and

desert Arabs; and should these so far overcome their antagonism to one another, as to unite against the common enemy, Turkish tenure would not be long in the land. Moreover, in such an event the pilgrims would join the natives with a zeal even greater than their own.

The two chief cities, Meccah in the south and Medinah in the north, are distant from one another, by the shortest road, about three hundred and sixty miles, and this distance is accomplished on swift camels in six days. The next chief inland town is Taif, distant seventy-five miles east-south-east from Meccah, at a considerable elevation above that city, and situated on the southern rise of the highest mountains in the Hejaz, the Gazuan range, on the tops of which snow remains throughout the year. The two chief ports are Yembu and Jeddah. Yembu is the port of Medinah, and possesses a considerable import trade for the supply of its chief town. Also many pilgrims to both the great sanctuaries disembark there. Here the Sultan's authority is supposed to begin to the northward.

Jeddah is the port of Meccah, and is situated on the coast exactly west of its chief town. It possesses a commodious and safe harbour, though somewhat dangerous of approach, and a trade so considerable that lines of English steamers call regularly, and during the pilgrim season fleets of seven or eight large vessels are often seen riding there at one time. Numbers of European merchants and agents reside in Jeddah. Natives of every country under the sun may be seen in its crowded bazaars, and the products of the same may be bought in its shops and stalls. Excepting in two particulars it bears a strong family likeness to every other town in the Hejaz, especially to Meccah; and these are, that the place is not interdicted to intoxicating drinks or Christians; but these abominations to the true believer are strictly confined to the very circumscribed space enclosed within its walls. The town covers an area of probably two miles in circumference, and the whole of this space is thickly built over, except along the water's edge, where large open spaces

are left, and where exist a few squares connected with the most ruinous fortifications.

It is outside the walls of Jeddah, that Mohammedans locate the Tomb of Eve. I did not visit it; but from the descriptions of my companions who did, it cannot be much changed since Burton's day. He describes it in these words:

"I now proceed to the last of my visitations.

"Outside the walls of Jeddah lies no less a personage than Sittna Hawwa, the mother of mankind.

"The boy Mohammed and I, mounting asses one evening, issued through the Meccan gate, and turned towards the north-east, over a sandy plain. After half-an-hour's ride, amongst dirty huts and tattered coffee-hovels, we reached the *enceinte*, and found the door closed. Presently a man came running with might from the town; he was followed by two others; and it struck me at the time that they applied the key with peculiar *empressement*, and made inordinately low congees, as we entered the enclosure of whitewashed walls.

"The Mother is supposed to lie, like a Moslemah, fronting the Kaabah, with her feet northwards, her head southwards, and her right cheek propped by her right hand. Whitewashed and conspicuous to the voyager and traveller from afar, is a diminutive dome, with an opening to the west; it is furnished as such places usually are in El-Hejaz. Under it, and in the centre, is a square stone, planted upright, and fancifully carved, to represent the omphalic region of the human frame. This, as well as the dome, is called El-Surrah, or, the navel. The cicerone directed me to kiss this manner of hieroglyph, which I did, thinking the while that, under the circumstances, the salutation was quite uncalled-for.

"Having prayed here and at the head, where a few young trees grew, we walked along the side of the two parallel dwarf walls which define the outlines of the body: they are about six paces apart, and, between them, upon Eve's neck, are two tombs, occupied, I was told, by Usman Pasha and his son, who repaired the Mother's sepulchre.

"I could not help remarking to the boy

Mohammed that, if our first parent measured a hundred and twenty paces from head to waist, and eighty from waist to heel, she must have presented much the appearance of a duck. To this the youth replied flippantly, that he thanked his stars the Mother was under ground, otherwise that men would lose their senses with fright."

* * * * *

"The idol of Jeddah, in the days of Arab litholatry, was called *Sakhrah Tawilah*, the Long Stone. May not this stone of Eve be the Moslemised revival of the old idolatry?"

But for the Turkish authority in the Hejaz, Christians would not be tolerated by the natives even in Jeddah, and their residence on the holy soil is a standing grievance to the Meccans. Daily they may be heard to groan out "Christians in Jeddah—battal! (bad)." I have no hesitation in saying, though I may risk the charge of offering an immature opinion, that should any political or fanatical ferment arise in the Hejaz, one of the first results

will be the massacre of all the Europeans in Jeddah. As a Nazzara (Christian) in the Hejaz, I should feel safer in Meccah itself than in Jeddah, at this moment. Found by the authorities, in Meccah, I might perhaps—as was the case with an Englishman who attempted the pilgrimage in 1876—be mercifully and ignominiously expelled as an idiot; but should an outbreak occur in Jeddah I would expect no quarter.

I know that a man-o'-war is usually within easy reach of the port; but Englishmen have a habit of closing their eyes to the strongest evidences of this description of danger; and our consuls are murdered every year, and our subjects assassinated for want of timely precautions.

How easily the fanatic who assassinated the late Shereef of Meccah,* little more than two years after I had seen him at Arafat, while in the act of shaking hands with H.B.M.'s Consul, at Jeddah, might have turned his knife against the "Sahib!"

I do not believe that the Consulate at Jeddah, with all its advantages of proximity to the scenes,

* March 14th, 1880.

and apparently trustworthy emissaries, obtains one word of true information as to the situation of affairs in the interior.

Now and again there reaches us a short tantalising paragraph in one of the daily papers, seemingly penned by someone from a vague rumour, and making meagre allusion to a great and important political movement in a country which is perhaps the most influential of the Mohammedan Powers. In these days of universal intercommunication and rapid and certain spread of the most trifling news-matter, to and from the most out-of-the-way corners of the globe, what could better show how isolated and cut off from Christian supervision are the doings in the Hejaz. Who can know what alarming projects or conspiracies may not at this moment be on foot in Meccah, that centre and hotbed of Mohammedan intrigue? For my part I regard the Christians in Jeddah as sitting on the safety-valve of the Hejaz, and sooner or later an explosion inevitable.

It is not the Bedawins so much as the settled

Arabs who are to be feared. The nomads of the wilderness must have some powerful motive or influence to unite them. Nothing short of a great leader, with a new faith, licensing universal plunder, would do it. So split up into tribes and clans are they, that no ordinary cause would serve to induce a long-sustained concerted action on their part. Their arms too, which nothing would persuade them to exchange for superior weapons, are worthless. No crescentade which might be organised by them, no matter how widespread or of what dimensions, would be formidable to any but the first few unprepared victims.

The Bedawi in stature and form resemble the Bengali, but are wiry, tough, and probably weigh ten stone, where a Bengali of the same inches would weigh nine. Their costume has already been described, with many of their customs. Professedly they are Mohammedans of the Shafei class, but they make no outward show of that religion; such rites as I have seen them perform in the Haram at Meccah more resembled pagan or idola-

trous worship. They devoutly kiss the black stone, and run seven times round the Kaaba. During prayer their attitudes and prostrations are extremely grotesque, not in the least resembling those of any recognised Mohammedan sect. While on the road in the desert I have never seen them occupied in any act of devotion whatever.

From what I have hitherto said about the Bedawi, his character will, I suspect, have impressed the reader unfavourably; but there really is much in the desert man to admire: his hospitality, and genuineness as a scoundrel, and above all, his untiring energy and hardihood—qualities in which he differs so much from all other Easterns. He makes no excuse for his acts of violence and depredation, nor claims any religious motive or sanction for them.

He openly declares himself an outcast and brigand, at enmity with everything approaching civilisation. His points of honour with his clansmen are numerous and extremely nice, and the murder of a relation is inherited, as a blood-feud, from

father to son, until it is revenged. The knowledge of this makes them chary of killing an enemy outright; besides which, as in all savage states of society where man has little but his life to lose, he does not, as is generally supposed, undervalue it. The Bedawi, though undoubtedly a brave man, is also a very discreet one. He considers everything fair in war, and will never, except under a very strong incitive, expose himself to unnecessary danger. Though swords flash out at a word, the wounds given are always trifling, the cuts being directed at the limbs, and few Bedawi are to be met whose legs and arms have not a number of long black cicatrices to show. On receiving a wound gunpowder is immediately applied to it and rubbed in: this blackens the scar and makes it conspicuous for life.

The three national arms of the Arab are the gun, spear, and sword.

The guns are usually matchlocks, with a short butt, not more than a foot long, and a stock extending throughout the whole length of the barrel. In

the most admired weapons the barrels exceed five feet in length, the metal in them is very heavy, and at the muzzle and breech it is as much as half an inch thick, in cases where the barrel is reinforced by rings. On account of the great length of barrel and thickness of the metal admitting the use of a heavy charge of powder, with but slight vibration, the guns are adapted for throwing a spherical bullet to a great range with precision; but the sights are of an exceedingly primitive description, so that a Bedawin with a gun he is accustomed to, takes about a minute and a half to get on to a fixed object. I have been told that they make some very fine shooting when they do fire; but though I have several times seen reputed good shots trying their hands at short ranges, I have seen nothing but the worst of bad practice from them. Pistols are also carried by the Shaykhs; these are in nearly all cases flint and steel; many are of European manufacture. I inspected one very handsome pair of English silver-mounted duelling pistols, from the belt of a Shaykh, with their one-time owner's name

on a silver plate let into the hilts, "R. Williams, 1808." If they could have told their own history, I undertake to say that they would have had some strange tales to tell of the vicissitudes and adventures which landed them eventually where they were.

The spears in common use are of two kinds. The long one, exceeding twelve feet, is used when mounted. Its shaft is made of the male bamboo from India, and is decorated with one or two tufts of ostrich-feathers under the head. The shorter one is used by footmen, and is by far the best-judged and most serviceable weapon I met with among the Bedawi. It never exceeds eight feet in length, and I have seen them only half that length. It is composed of three parts, of equal length. The extremities are iron, and the centre a round shaft of hardwood, the thickness of a man's thumb; the blade is four-sided, and flattened rather in one direction, and at its broadest part is not more than half an inch, and gradually tapers a couple of feet to a fine point. The iron of the butt-end is the

same length as the blade, about a third the entire spear, but is round and not so finely pointed or gradually tapered, it being only used for sticking in the sand to stand the spear. In use, this weapon is retained in the hand, and might be very fairly opposed to the bayonet, but I have seen it launched with great accuracy and penetrating power up to a distance of thirty yards. The swords seldom exceed two feet in length, are much curved, sharp on both edges, and finely pointed. They are always worn across the body, in front of the girdle, with the hilts to the left. Some of the wealthier Shaykhs carry the well-known Persian sword. During the whole of my stay in the Hejaz I did not see the faces of twenty women. In the three remarkable instances in which I met with good-looking ones I have recorded all the circumstances. Though there may be a few very sweet faces among the young girls, they soon come to maturity, and age early. Only haggard old crones, of an ugliness truly repulsive, present themselves to the stranger in the camps.

The exports of the Hejaz are few, and I believe the following short list will comprise all:

Kohl, or powdered antimony, used for making up the eyes by darkening the rims. This properly belongs to the toilet of the women, but it is often used with good effect on the eyes of some dissipated old opium-eater, or to heighten the gleam in the optics of a young dandy. Henna, the crimson dye used by women to make their nails pink, and sometimes by Hindi women to colour the whole of both their hands and feet a deep red. This custom also is not strictly confined to the women. Hides, dates, zemzem water, balsam of Meccah—a universal specific—gold, precious stones, talismans, charms—and I know of no other products sent out of the country.

CHAPTER XIV.

PILGRIMS IN ENGLISH SHIPS.

THE sea-portion of the journey is regarded by the Hindi pilgrims as entailing greater hardships than any other portion of the whole pilgrimage. Apart from the ordinary sickness and inconvenience experienced by landsmen on a sea-voyage, they are crowded together by hundreds on the filthy wet decks of small steamers, and do not receive as much care or attention as cattle would under similar circumstances. Water and firing is supposed to be served out to them, but in all else they bring their own supplies. So crowded are they sometimes that I have seen weaker pilgrims and women, prostrated by sea-sickness, go for three days without water, on account of the greedi-

ness of the stronger, and carelessness of those whose duty it was to see to its proper distribution.

I regret to say that there are men among my brother-sailors in the East who treat the natives, over whom they may be "dressed in a little brief authority," with a brutality and harshness such as they would never have the boldness to show towards the meekest of their own countrymen. I have seen a mate of a ship kick in the mouth a woman who was kissing his feet, all because she had lost her ticket, valued at ten rupees. My blood boiled as I heard the coward cursing the cowering wretch, in a voice that sounded like a railway-train crossing a bridge. When such is the conduct of the officers, of course the sailors follow their example, and every ignorant stoker who is master of a few broken sentences of that barbarous jargon, half-Portuguese half-Hindostani, spoken by native sailors in English ships, exercises what he fondly imagines a native curse, on every helpless passenger who gets in the way of his very superior self and intelligence.

I have sat in a room and heard Englishmen telling, with boisterous mirth, how a sea came and washed twelve Hajis overboard, and swept the property of nearly all the rest from the deck; and how, all their supplies being gone, the captain, after keeping them on nothing until they began to end their misery by jumping overboard, generously gave them a few buckets of beans from the cargo.

These things do happen yearly under the English flag, and I think some of our slave-trade suppressing resources might be turned to investigating outrages on humanity nearer home with advantage.

I do not mean to say that barbarities are practised as a rule on the pilgrims in English ships, but ill-treatment and overcrowding are so common as to call for increased official supervision. Also, there is often much mismanagement on the part of charterers and agents of the pilgrim-ships, causing great suffering to the native passengers, for which the ship's people are in no way to blame. One instance I will quote which came under my

knowledge. This instance will not bring me under the censure of anyone, as I believe no one was to blame, and it reflects nothing but credit on all my countrymen concerned.

It happened on board the very ship in which I took passage from Jeddah to Bombay on the immediately-preceding voyage. She had been placed in the pilgrim service only, and carried no cargo. After landing her native passengers from Bombay at Jeddah, a few days before the coming off of the great pilgrimage to Arafat, she was put on the berth to make an intermediate trip to Suez before returning to Bombay. This was to put in the time she would otherwise have been waiting at Jeddah, until she could secure her full complement of passengers to India.

The pilgrims who embarked at Jeddah for Suez numbered about a hundred—not enough to pay for coals, one would have thought; and these were all Arabs from different parts of North Africa — the most objectionable class of pilgrims that could be got together in numbers.

The lower classes of them are the dirtiest people I know—excepting, perhaps, a few tribes in the Arctic; they are bold and daring to a degree, and possess an average physique equal, if not superior, to any Europeans. Men of the most splendid muscular development are common among them. On the way up to Suez smallpox broke out among the ship's crew, and she was not allowed to land her pilgrims at the termination of the passage. After lying four days in the roads, and burying four of her sailors, on a distant sand-spit on the opposite side of the bay to the town, the Egyptian authorities ordered her down to Tor, a small anchorage on the Sinaitic shores of the Gulf of Suez, to lay out forty days' quarantine. While at Suez the ship had not been allowed to maintain any communication with the shore, but on going away they were allowed to *leave one sick man behind them*, who, we heard afterwards, died in Suez of the smallpox. No other deaths occurred on board the ship, and the epidemic left the ship as suddenly as it had appeared.

The pilgrims, on arriving at their new destination, and understanding what was to be their fate, were of course highly enraged; but as all their arms had been taken from them on coming on board, and they were so few, numbering little more than double the ship's company, it was not feared but that they would be managed without difficulty.

At first things went on smoothly enough, but in a few days the pilgrims found that, husband their stores as they might, they would soon be exhausted. They had only supplied themselves with food for the passage up, and no provisions could be procured at the place they were now in; no inhabitants were seen during the whole time the ship was there, and the country presented nothing but bare, hot, naked rocks and mountains. They were offered a daily ration of ship-bread per man; but this Christian food they said they must rather die than accept. As they became more and more pressed by hunger, their behaviour became more noisy, and at length quite mutinous. Knowing that the ship's people could

not understand them, old men would stand up and harangue the crowd, evidently counselling some strong measures. At night they would sit about in excited groups, discussing their position volubly and threateningly.

After a time, driven by starvation, they seemed to have agreed that if they could obtain Christian food by stealth or violence they might eat it, but would as yet accept no gift. At first they would watch the cook, and the moment his back was turned purloin any little scraps lying about; they would watch the sailors lay down their pipes, and steal them. Then they grew bolder, and one stalwart Moor, finding a boy smoking alone, took the pipe out of his mouth by force. They took every opportunity to insult the men and officers of the ship, and the practice of snatching men's pipes from their mouths became quite common; but for the captain's express orders to bear with them as much as possible, things must have come to a climax sooner. However, arms were made ready early, and preparations set on foot to meet any serious movement on the part of the Arabs.

One day a crowd rushed into the galley, just as the cabin dinner was being dished up to send aft, and turning out the cook, devoured everything. Now they simply took all the eatables that came in their way. The sailors' rations were stolen from them as they carried them along the decks, the galley rifled at each meal, and, to make a long story short, they had charge of the ship.

This could not be put up with longer, and they must be shown that they had gone too far. The captain's arrangements for offence and defence were made. From the poop to the midship bridge there ran a gangway bridge, which could be raised and lowered. On this midship bridge two armed sentries were posted, with orders to allow no Arabs on to it. There were two other ways on to the poop from the main-deck; these were inside the poop, behind two stout doors on each side the deck, which could be closed. Placed inside these doors were the two ship's guns, loaded to the muzzle with links of chopped-up chain. The position of these guns was such that the doors might be

thrown open for a moment, the deck swept fore-and-aft on both sides with the terrible discharge, and instantly after, the doors closed before the guns. On the poop were placed all the arms and ammunition: twelve rifles, six revolvers, six bayonets, and a miscellaneous assortment of sharpened files, belaying-pins, knives, and—hardest lines of all for the Arabs—a selection of the most useful of their own weapons. But the greatest reliance was placed on the hot-water hose, from which a stream of boiling water could be discharged half the length of the ship. Still the captain hesitated to show his strength, and every endeavour was made to induce the Arabs to eat Christian biscuit peaceably; but they would not, and soon brought things to a head. A young lad was coming to the cabin with a dish of hot currie, when two Arabs waylaid him, and as they attempted to seize the dish, he threw the contents over them. They caught hold of the boy and were very severely ill-treating him, when the captain and a number of the crew came and rescued him. More Arabs gathered round and

more sailors. A row was imminent. The captain was struck; that was enough. He went up on to the bridge and blew three short blasts upon the steam-whistle. It was the signal for all hands to assemble on and inside the poop, at posts which had already been allotted to them.

As soon as the captain and two sentries reached the poop from the midship bridge, the fore-and-aft gangway was triced up. In a quarter of a minute every white man in the ship was in his place. The Arabs were almost as quick, and ready to battle. They rushed aft in a body; but there was no way on to the poop for them, unless they scaled the front in face of the crew. At first they contented themselves with gesticulating and howling defiance, and then one splendid young fellow stepped to the front, and, calling to the others to follow him, actually leapt at a bound from the deck and caught the poop-railing. The captain's revolver was at his breast in a moment. He looked back, saw those behind him hesitating; so, glaring in the captain's face, he tore open his

shirt, and forced his naked breast on the revolver, so suddenly that the captain must have had a steady hand, or it would have gone off. Just at that moment an old quartermaster—the man who told me the story better than any of the others—reached over the captain's shoulder and knocked the brave young fellow's brains out with a blow of an iron belaying-pin.

In the meantime, where was the hot water? For the first few seconds of discharge, the water that has been in the pipes is cold. So the hose was put overboard for a minute, until the water direct from the boiler should reach its mouth. When it was found hot enough, the water was cut off and the nozzle swung in-board to be directed at the Arabs. The sailor who was doing this, either out of mischief or by accident, allowed a few drops of the boiling fluid to escape in a sparkling crescent over the crowd on the main-deck. The effect was magical.

On discovering the murderous instrument in the hands of the Christians—rather than be boiled

running about—they surrendered unconditionally. Within two hours they were all landed on a small island near, supplied with sails for tents and covering, and given puncheons of bread and water, as much as they could consume. They were very glad indeed to accept it before they got away, and they lived quite peaceably among themselves, occasioning no more trouble until they were landed at Suez, where the Egyptian Government put them under an armed escort until they were clear of the country.

NOTE.

[From *The Athenæum*, July 23.]

THE MECCA PILGRIM.

Godalming, July 19, 1881.

I HAVE just returned from the United States, and observe that some doubt has been cast upon the authenticity of statements made in my book, "Six Months in Meccah," both as to my ability to perform the pilgrimage, and with regard to the story of the English lady whom I met in Meccah. I would wish to state that

I am the son of the Rev. William Keane, for many years senior canon of the Cathedral, Calcutta, perhaps one of the best speakers of native dialects in India. I have spent seven years of my life among Mohammedans, and at one time I served three years as officer on board a ship carrying a Mohammedan crew. The latter experience would be quite sufficient to give me a thorough knowledge of the Mohammedan language and customs. My pilgrimage to Meccah was no rash experiment or accident, but the outcome of a long-cherished project. I have now in my possession a private letter, addressed to me by the English lady whom I met in Meccah, which proves most conclusively that the statements made in "Six Months in Meccah"—so far at least as she is concerned—are correct.

I hope these statements will satisfy those who have read my book that I did perform the pilgrimage to Meccah.

My publishers are now about to issue the record of my journey from Meccah to Medinah, which many of the reviewers of "Six Months in Meccah" have asked for.

J. F. KEANE (Hajj Mohammed Amin).

* * * * *

With reference to the "Lady Venus," who received so much incidental mention at my hands in describing my life in Meccah, I feel called upon to add the following few remarks:

"The Lady Venus" is not a fancy name, but a literal translation of "Begum Zarah," the name by which she was known in Meccah. Throughout the

whole of the inquiry, instituted by the Government, to ascertain the truth of my statements concerning her, she has been extremely reticent as to her antecedents. But she has admitted that she is English, and it has been discovered with tolerable certainty who she really is.

She is now amply provided for in India, and has expressed a desire that she be left unmolested in that country, in her present retirement, and the obscurity of a native home.

Every possible inducement has been held out to her to return to Christianity; but as she remains obdurate, nothing can be done for her, and I unquestionably can give no more publicity to her case, or divulge anything further concerning her.

THE END.

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